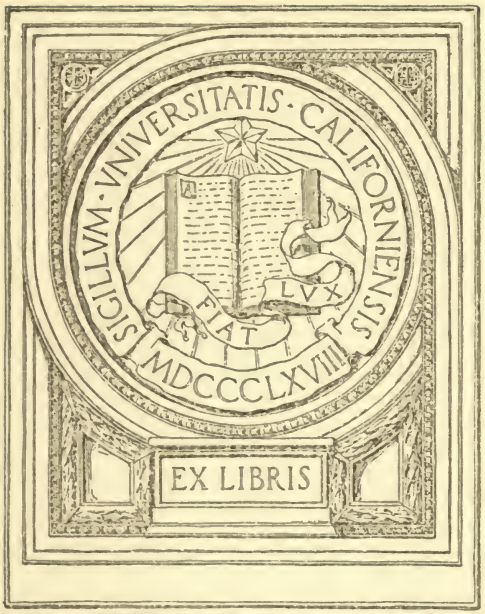
THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER

SEUMAS O'BRIEN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THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER

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Everybody came to the valley and everybody enjoyed coming, because there was no place like it.
FRONTISPIECE. *See page 14.*

The Whale and the Grasshopper

And Other Fables

By

Seumas O'Brien

With a frontispiece by
Robert McCaig

Boston
Little, Brown, and Company
1916

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Published, November, 1916

THE · PLIMPTON · PRESS
NORWOOD · MASS · U · S · A

TO
EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

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The Whale and the Grasshopper

WHEN Padna Dan started talking to his friend Micus Pat as they walked at a leisurely pace towards the town of Castlegregory on a June morning, what he said was: "The world is a wonderful place when you come to think about it, and Ireland is a wonderful place and so is America, and though there are lots of places like each other, there's no place like Ballysantamalo. When there's not sunshine there, there's moonshine, and the handsomest women in the world live there, and nowhere else except in Ireland or the churchyards could you find such decent people."

"Decency," said Micus, "when you're poor is extravagance, and bad example when you're rich."

"And why?" said Padna.

"Well," said Micus, "because the poor imitate the rich and the rich give to the poor and when the poor give to each other they have nothing of their own."

"That's communism you're talking," said Padna, "and that always comes before education and enlightenment. Sure, if the poor weren't decent they'd be rich, and if the rich were decent they'd be poor, and if every one had a conscience there'd be less millionaires."

" 'Tis a poor bird that can't pick for himself."

"But suppose a bird had a broken wing and couldn't fly to where the pickings were?" said Micus.

"Well, then bring the pickings to him. That would be charity."

"But charity is decency and wisdom is holding your tongue when you don't know what you're talking about."

"If the people of Ballysantamalo are so decent, how is it that there are so many bachelors there? Do you think it right to have all the young women

worrying their heads off reading trashy novels and doing all sorts of silly things like fixing their hair in a way that was never intended by nature and doing so for years and years and having nothing in the end but the trouble of it all?"

"Well, 'tis hard blaming the young men because every young lady you meet looks better to you than the last until you meet the next, and so you go from one to another until you're so old that no one would marry you at all unless you had lots of money, a bad liver, and a shaky heart."

"An old man without any sense, lots of money, a bad liver, and a shaky heart can always get a young lady to marry him," said Micus, "though rheumatics, gout, and a wooden leg are just as good in such a case."

"Every bit," said Padna, "but there's nothing like a weak constitution, a cold climate, and a tendency to pneumonia."

"Old men are queer," said Micus.

"They are," said Padna, "and if they were all only half as wise as they think they are, then

there'd be only young fools in the world. I don't wonder a bit at the suffragettes. And a time will come when we won't know men from women unless someone tells us so."

"Wisha, 'tis my belief that there will be a great reaction some day, because women will never be able to stand the strain of doing what they please without encountering opposition. When a man falls into love he falls into trouble likewise, and when a woman isn't in trouble you may be sure that there's something wrong with her."

"Well," said Padna, "I think we will leave the women where the Devil left St. Peter, —"

"Where was that?" asked Micus.

"Alone," answered Padna.

"That would be all very fine if they stayed there," said Micus.

"Now," said Padna, "as I was talking of my travels in foreign parts, I want to tell you about the morning I walked along the beach at Ballysantamalo, and a warm morning it was too. So I ses to meself, 'Padna Dan,' ses I, 'what kind of a

fool of a man are you? Why don't you take a swim for yourself?' So I did take a swim, and I swam to the rocks where the seals go to get their photographs taken, and while I was having a rest for myself I noticed a grasshopper sitting a short distance away and 'pon my word, but he was the most sorrowful-looking grasshopper I ever saw before or since. Then all of a sudden a monster whale comes up from the sea and lies down beside him and ses: 'Well,' ses he, 'is that you? Who'd ever think of finding you here! Why there's nothing strange under the sun but the ways of woman.'

"' 'Tis me that's here, then,' ses the grasshopper. 'My grandmother died last night and she wasn't insured either.'

"'The practice of negligence is the curse of mankind and the root of sorrow,' ses the whale. 'I suppose the poor old soul had her fill of days, and sure we all must die, and 'tis cheaper to be dead than alive at any time. A man never knows that he's dead when he is dead, and he never knows he's alive until he's married.'

"'You're a great one to expatiate on things you know nothing about like the barbers and the cobblers,' said the grasshopper. 'I only want to know if you're coming to the funeral to-morrow.'

"'I'm sorry I can't,' ses the whale. 'My grandfather is getting married for the tenth time and I was in China on the last few occasions. I must pay my respects by being present at to-morrow's festivities,' ses he.

"'I'm sorry you can't come,' ses the grasshopper, 'because you are heartily welcome and you'd add prestige to the ceremony besides.'

"'I know that,' ses the whale, 'but America don't care much about ceremony.'

"'Who told you that?' ses the grasshopper.

"'Haven't I my eyesight, and don't I read the newspapers?' ses the whale.

"'You mustn't read the society columns, then,' ses the grasshopper.

"'Wisha, for the love of St. Crispin,' ses the whale, 'have they society columns in the American newspapers?'

"'Indeed they have,' ses the grasshopper, 'and they oftentimes devote a few columns to other matters when the dressmakers don't be busy.'

"'America is a strange country surely, a wonderful country, not to say a word about the length and breadth of it. I swam around it twice last week without stopping, to try and reduce my weight, and would you believe me that I was tired after the journey, but the change of air only added to my proportions?'

"'That's too bad,' ses the grasshopper?

"'Are you an American?' ses the whale.

"'Of course I am,' ses the grasshopper. 'You don't think 'tis the way I'd be born at sea and no nationality at all, like yourself. I'm proud of my country.'

"'And why, might I ask?'

"'Well, don't we produce distinguished Irishmen, and make Americans of the Europeans and Europeans of the Americans? Think of all the connoisseurs who wouldn't buy a work of art in their own country, when they could go to Europe and pay ten times the value for the pot-boilers

that does be turned out in the studios of Paris and London.'

"'There's nothing like home industry,' ses the whale, 'in a foreign country, I mean.'

"'After all, who knows anything about a work of art but the artist, and very little he knows about it either. A work of art is like a flower; it grows, it happens. That's all. And unless you charge the devil's own price for it, people will think you are cheating them.'

"'Wisha, I suppose the best any one can do is to take all you can get and if you want to be a philanthropist give away what you don't want,' ses the grasshopper.

"'All worth missing I catches,' ses the whale, 'and all worth catching I misses, like the fisherman who lost the salmon and caught a crab. How's things in Europe? I didn't see the papers this morning.'

"'Europe is in a bad way,' ses the grasshopper. 'She was preaching civilization for centuries, so that she might be prepared when war came to annihilate herself.'

"'It looks that way to me,' ses the whale. 'Is there anything else worth while going on in the world?'

"'There's the Irish question,' ses the grasshopper.

"'Where's that Ireland is?' ses the whale. 'Isn't that an island to the west of England?'

"'No,' ses the grasshopper, 'but England is an island to the east of Ireland.'

"'Wisha,' ses the whale, 'it gives me indigestion to hear people talking about Ireland. Sure, I nearly swallowed it up by mistake while I was on a holiday in the Atlantic last year, and I'm sorry now that I didn't.'

"'And I'm sorry that you didn't try,' ses the grasshopper. 'Then you'd know something about indigestion. The less you have to say about Ireland, the less you'll have to be sorry for. Remember that my father came from Cork.'

"'Can't I say what I like?' ses the whale.

"'You can think what you like,' ses the grasshopper, 'but say what other people like if you want to be a good politician.'

"'There's nothing so much abused as politics,' ses the whale.

"'Except politicians,' ses the grasshopper. 'Only for the Irish there'd be no one bothering about poetry and the drama to-day. Only for fools there'd be no wise people, and only for sprats, hake, and mackerel there'd be no whales, and a good job that would be too.'

"'What's that you're saying?' ses the whale very sharply.

"'Don't have me to lose my temper with you,' ses the grasshopper.

"'Wisha, bad luck to your impudence and bad manners, you insignificant little spalpeen. How dare you insult your superiors?' ses the whale.

"'Who's my superior?' says the grasshopper. 'You, is it?'

"'Yes, me then,' says the whale.

"'Well,' ses the grasshopper, 'there's no doubt but vanity, ignorance, and ambition are three wonderful things, and you have them all.'

"'Another word from you,' ses the whale, 'and I'll put you where Napoleon put the oysters.'

"'Neither you, nor Napoleon, nor the Kaiser himself and his hundred million men could do hurt or harm to me. You could have every soldier in the German army, the French army, and the Salvation Army looking for me, and I'd put the comether on them all.'

"'I can't stand this any longer,' ses the whale, and then and there he hits the rock a whack of his tail, and when I went to look for the grasshopper, there he was sitting on the whale's nose as happy and contented as if nothing had happened. And when he jumped back to the rock again, he says: 'A little exercise when 'tis tempered with discretion never does any harm, but violent exertion is a very foolish thing if you value your health. But it is only people who have no sense, but think they have it all, who make such errors.'

"'If I could only get a hold of you,' ses the whale, 'I'd knock some of the pride out of you.'

"'That would be an ungentlemanly way of displaying your displeasure,' ses the grasshopper.

"'I'd scorn,' ses he, 'to use violent means with you, or do you physical injury of any kind. All

you want is self control and a little education. You should know that quantity without quality isn't as good as quality without quantity.'

"'Sure, 'tis I'm the fool to be wasting my time listening to the likes of you,' ses the whale. 'If any of my own family saw me now, I'd never hear the end of it.'

"'Indeed,' ses the grasshopper, 'no one belonging to me would ever recognise me ever again if they thought I was trying to make a whale behave himself. There would be some excuse for one of my attainments feeling proud. But as for you — !'

"'And what in the name of nonsense can you do except give old guff out of you?'

"'I haven't time to tell you all,' ses the grasshopper. 'But to commence with, I can travel all over the world and have the use of trains, steamers, sailing ships, and automobiles and will never be asked to pay a cent, and I can live on the dry land all my life if I choose, while you can't live under water, or over water, on land or on sea, and while all the king's horses and all the king's

men couldn't catch me if they were trying till the crack of doom, you could be caught by a few poor ignorant harmless sailors, who wouldn't know a crow from a cormorant and who'd sell your old carcass to make oil for foolish wives to burn and write letters to other people's husbands and fill the world with trouble.'

"'And what about all the whalebone we supplies for ladies' corsets and paper knives, and what about all the stories we make for the novelists and the moving pictures and —'"

"We're at the Sprig of Holly now," said Micus. "Is it a pint of porter or a bottle of stout you'll have?"

"I'll have a pint, I think," said Padna.

The House in the Valley

DOWN in the valley squirrels were busy climbing the hazel trees; rabbits made bold and ventured from their hiding places to gambol in the autumnal sunshine; weasels sported among the ferns; birds sang and insects buzzed, while nature looked on and smiled. Larch, birch, oak, and sycamore were altogether mingled, and perfect harmony there was in bower and hedgerow. Everybody came to the valley and everybody enjoyed coming, because there was no place like it. There was no color that you could not find there; but if you searched all day and all night too, only one house could you find in all its leafy splendor. Nor was it a large house. Just two stories high, with medium-sized windows below and small dormer

windows on top. The roof was made of thatch, and the thatch, from being bleached in the sun, had turned to a golden hue. The walls, no one could tell what they were made of, so well were they covered with ivy and other green creepers. In the garden in front there were roses, pinks, and geraniums; and in the garden behind, nasturtiums, money-musk, and golden feather grew on a rockery made of large stones that were brought from Conlan's Strand, where the children of Lir (before they became swans) used to play and watch the great ships sailing over the seas. It was a beautiful place to live, was this house, and whosoever looked upon it never forgot the house in the valley.

"This is a wonderful place, surely!" said a stranger, as he looked down from a crag and surveyed the winding valley beneath.

"A more wonderful place you could not find in a lifetime," responded Micus Pat, as he lit his pipe.

"I believe you," said the stranger. "Sure, 'tis ten years of my life I'd give to own that house,"

as he pointed to where blue smoke was curling skywards. "Who built it at all, I'd like to know?"

"Sit down there," said Micus Pat, as he pointed to a fallen tree, "and I'll tell you."

And this is what he told:

"Well, it all happened when His Royal Highness the Czar of Russia came on a visit to the Mayor of Cahermore."

"That must have been a long time ago," interrupted the stranger.

"Of course it was," said Micus. "But, as I was saying, when His Royal Highness came to the town, there was great excitement entirely. Every man, woman, and child put on their Sunday clothes, and never before nor since was there such eating and drinking, nor such dancing and singing. Flags were flying from the windows and the housetops, and the birds in the cages and the birds in the trees sang until they got so hoarse that they couldn't sing any more. The Czar himself was delighted, and some say that he grew

two inches taller from all he had seen: but he wasn't much of a man at that. He was just an inch or so bigger than yourself, and maybe a bit better looking, but who'd be boasting about such things, anyway? Well, though the Czar was neither big nor small, good looking nor bad looking, all the Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses were the sight of the world. They too were delighted with themselves and everybody else, and all went well until the Czar was making his speech, and Bryan O'Loughlin taking it down in shorthand."

"What did he want taking down the speech for?" said the stranger.

"I'm surprised at your ignorance," said Micus. "Sure you ought to know that the Czar gets all his speeches printed and gives them to his children to read during the cold wintry nights in Russia. There's so much frost and snow there that His Royal Highness never leaves his children run about the roads to warm themselves, like other children, for fear of their getting chilblains and toothaches."

"He must be a good father, then," said the stranger.

"Of course he is," said Micus, and he proceeded. "'Well, the speech was wonderfully worded and loudly applauded, and nearly ended, when a loud report rang out like as if some one was trying to blow up the world —'"

"The Lord save us!" said the stranger.

"Amen!" said Micus. "And when the silence was resumed, some one shouted at the top of his voice. 'Anarchists! Anarchists! Anarchists!'"

"What is an anarchist?" asked the stranger.

"An anarchist," answered Micus, "is one who don't know what's the matter with himself or the world, and cares as little about his own life as he does about any one else's."

"There are a lot of fools in the world, I'm thinking," said the stranger.

"There are, thank God," replied Micus. "Well, as true as I'm telling you, every one in the place took to their heels when the great noise came, except Bryan O'Loughlin and the Czar himself. And if you looked out through the windows of

the Town Hall, you'd see for miles and miles and miles along the roads nothing but Grand Dukes and fair ladies, soldiers and sailors, and they flying helter-skelter as though the Devil, or Cromwell himself, was after them."

"And what did the Czar himself say?" queried the stranger.

"'The pusillanimous varmints,' ses he, as he trod the floor with disdain; and then, lo and behold! another blast rang out, and the Czar with all his swords and medals fell into Bryan's arms, and cried out! 'I'm a dead man,' ses he. 'Bury me with my mother's people!'

"But he was no more dead than myself, for he only stepped on a blank cartridge which was dropped by some of the Grand Dukes in the scrummage for the doors — and that's what nearly took the senses from His Royal Highness the Czar of Russia.

"Well, when he came to himself some time after, he ses to Bryan: 'You're a brave man,' ses he, 'and you must be rewarded for your valor,' and Bryan felt as proud as the Duke of Wellington

and he after putting the comether on poor Napoleon; and to show how little he cared for danger, he trod on every cartridge he saw on the floor, and if you were there you'd think 'twas at the battle of Vinegar Hill you were.

"'Be careful,' ses the Czar, 'one of them cartridges might be loaded. I can see you are a brave man' (and he was too, for he was married three times, and he a widower, and he but three and thirty). 'There's nothing like discretion,' ses the Czar, 'if you want to keep alive and out of trouble.'

"'I'm afraid of nothing,' ses Bryan. 'And I'll always befriend a stranger in a foreign country.'

"And when the Czar heard that, he ses: 'Bryan O'Loughlin of Cahermore, come here to me,' and Bryan came. 'Sit down there,' ses he, 'while I fill my pipe,' and when his pipe was filled, he up and ses, as he drew a lot of photographs from his pocket: 'These are my seven daughters,' ses he, and Bryan was delighted and surprised, so he ses: 'And is their mother living too?' 'She is, indeed,' says the Czar, and with-

out saying another word he pulls her photograph out of another pocket, and when Bryan sees it, he ses: ' 'Pon my word, she's a fine, decent, grauver looking woman, and I wouldn't mind having her for a mother myself, only she looks too like a protestant.'

"'She was the Duchess of Skatchachivouchi,' ses the Czar.

"'Is that so? Well, then, she comes of a real decent family,' ses Bryan.

"'Now,' ses the Czar, 'I want to reward you for your wonderful courage, so you can have your choice of my seven daughters,' ses he, 'and I'll make you Duke of Siberia besides.'

"But Bryan neither hummed nor hawed, and only asked him for the fill of his pipe, and when both were puffing away together, ses Bryan to the Czar: 'I can see you are a decent man, and I must thank you for your kindness, and indeed I must say also that your daughters are fine respectable-looking young women, and I'm sure that they would make good wives if they were well looked after. But I promised my last wife,

and she on her dying bed, that I would never marry any one again but the King of Spain's daughter.'

"And when he had all that said, the Czar looked very sad, and turned as pale as a ghost, and all he said was: 'Well, I couldn't do any more for you,' and then ses he: 'Is there any place down here where we can have a drink?'

"'There is,' said Bryan, 'down in the glen at the Fox and Hounds.'

"So off they marched together, and after they treated each other to three halfs of whiskey each, the Czar looked very tired and forlorn, and said, as they made a short cut through St. Kevin's boreen, and observed the clouds of night coming on from east and west, and south and north, and not a friend nor an enemy in sight: 'Well,' ses he, 'how the devil am I to reach the shore in safety? I'm a mighty monarch, and I must have a body-guard.'

"To all this, and more besides, Bryan listened, but never a word did he say until he smoked nearly all the Czar's tobacco, and burnt all his

matches; and then all of a sudden he ses, 'Leave it to me,' ses he. 'I can get you a bodyguard.'

"'I wouldn't doubt you,' ses the Czar, as he slipped him a guinea. 'You can have this,' ses he, 'as you wouldn't have any of my daughters and be made the Duke of Siberia. But we'll none the less be friends,' ses he. 'Life is a tragedy or a comedy according to the way you look at it.'

"'The world's a stage,' says Bryan, 'but most of the actors don't know how to act: they are only supers at best!'

"'That's so,' ses the Czar. 'But what about my bodyguard?'

"'I'm thinking of it,' ses Bryan. 'Do you know my brother Larry?'

"'No,' says the Czar, 'the pleasure isn't mine.

"'Well, he's a second corporal in the Ballygarvan Lancers, and he's a great friend of the sergeant's, and between us I think we can find a bodyguard.'

"And as true as I'm telling you, after supper that night the Czar of Russia marched through

the streets of Cahermore with a bodyguard of the Ballygarvan Lancers behind and before him, and Bryan out in front leading the way, with a gun on his shoulder and a sword by his side, and everybody taking off their hats to him as he passed."

"And what happened to the Czar?" inquired the stranger.

"He went on board his warship and sacked all his generals, admirals, and Grand Dukes, and when he went back to Russia, he sent over his architect and masons to build a house for Bryan, and that's the house in the valley beyond."

"And was that the end of Bryan O'Loughlin and the Czar of Russia?"

"No," answered Micus. "Every Christmas his Royal Highness used to send Bryan Christmas cards from himself and the wife and children, and a box of blessed candles besides, and a bag of birdseed for the linnets, and sweetpea seed for the garden also; and there was no happier man in the whole world than Bryan till the day he died. And that's the end of my story."

"I think 'tis time to be going home now," said the stranger. "The swallows are flying low, and night will be overtaking me before I will be over the mountain."

"Don't get wet, whatever you do," said Micus. "It's bad for the rheumatics."

Peace and War

"WHAT about the story you promised to tell me last night?" said Micus to his friend Padna.

"Draw your chair closer to the fire, and you'll hear it," said Padna, and this is what he told:

"Johnny Moonlight was so called because of his love of nocturnal rambling, and Peep o' Day won his name because he rose every morning to see the sun rising. Johnny and Peep were neighbors, and it was no unusual thing for Johnny to meet Peep as he wended his way home while Peep wended his way from it. Johnny was the more loquacious of the two, and when Peep, who rose earlier than was his wont, saw him watching the reflection of the moon in the placid waters of Glenmoran Bay, he up and ses:

"What are you doing at all, at all, Johnny?"

"I am watching the moonbeams glistening on the waters," replied Johnny, "and what greater pleasure could any man have and all for nothing too?"

" 'Tis a glorious and a beautiful sight, surely, but the greatest of all pleasures is to see the sun rising and to listen to the birds singing in the bushes and to hear the cocks crowing and clapping their wings, not to say a word about watching the flowers opening up and drinking the morning dew. 'Tis in the morning that the world rejoices, and in the morning we see the work of God everywhere, and 'tis only in the darkness of the night that the badness comes upon men. Everybody loves the morning, and all the poets have written about it."

"Don't be bothering me about the poets. I'd rather walk by the light of the moon through the glens and the woods, through the winding boreens when the hawthorn and woodbine are in bloom, or by the shore of the bay when the world does be sleeping, and have nothing to disturb

my thoughts, except maybe a rabbit skedaddling through the ferns, or a banshee wailing when some one gets killed in the wars, than to see the sun breaking through the clouds at the grey of dawn.

"There's a lonesomeness and a queerness about the beginning of everything, and 'twas always the shaky feeling that came over me when I stayed out so late as to be caught by the rising sun on the roadside. But every man is entitled to his own opinion until he gets married, so we won't quarrel, because people who quarrel are always sorry for the things they say and the things they forget to say."

"You can't change a man's opinion," said Peep, "unless you change himself, and then he'd be some one else and stick to his own opinion the same as any of us."

"That's true," said Johnny, "and there's nothing worse than truth except lies. People only tell the truth when they are afraid of telling lies and then they must lie about it before any one believes them.

"Truth will make lies all fall to pieces, but more lies will patch them together again. So 'tis as good to be such a liar that nobody believes you as to be so fond of the truth that no one would trust you."

"Wisha, for goodness' sake, do you think that I have nothing else to do but getting my brains twisted trying to follow your contrary reasoning, which only leads a sensible man into confusion and bewilderment? What's the use of anything if you don't know how to enjoy yourself?"

"Devil the bit, and why people should go to the inconvenience of annoying themselves in order to please nobody is more than I can understand."

"If people could understand why they're sensible they'd become foolish, and if they could understand why they're foolish they'd become sensible. But as the wise and the foolish will never know what's the matter with each other, there will be always trouble in the world."

"There will be always trouble while women are

allowed to have their own way and their husbands' money."

"There's no sentiment in women."

"None whatever, but they are all able to act and play any part that the exigencies of the occasion may require, and that's better than having an abundance of sentiment or any other quality that hinders one's progress in a world of hypocrisy and conventionality."

" 'Tis the great flow of words you have, to be sure, not to say a word about your common-sense. Was it from reading books that you got all your knowledge?"

"It wasn't, indeed, but from observing the ways of all the strange creatures on the face of the earth from man to the ants."

"The world is a queer place. Nothing but war of some kind or other while you're alive and peace only when you're dead, and then there may be no peace either, for all we know."

" 'Tis thinking I am that you're right, and if you'll listen, I'll tell you what happened as I was sauntering about by myself last night."

"I'll listen, to be sure," said Peep.

"Well," said Johnny, "as I was walking along by the Faery Fort, I heard some one singing, so I quickened my pace and came upon two strange looking gentlemen who were marching to the tune of 'Home, Sweet Home.' And when I ses: 'Good night,' they answered back and ses: 'Good night kindly, sir,' ses they. 'Who may we have the pleasure of talking to?' 'To Johnny Moonlight,' ses I. 'And who may I be talking to?' 'Don't you know us,' says they altogether. 'Erra, of course I do,' ses I. 'Who would ye be but Oliver Cromwell and the Devil himself? And what may ye be doing here?'

"'We're on our way home after a trip to Europe,' ses the Devil, 'and we'd be glad to have the pleasure of your company.'

"'Your kindness is embarrassing,' ses I. 'Indeed I couldn't think of accepting such hospitality.'

"'Well, you can go to Belgium for all I care,' ses the Devil. 'But clear out of me sight, anyway, or I'll hand you over to me friend Oliver.'

So with that they sat down on a ditch and commenced talking, and I stole up behind, and this is what I heard:

"'I'm homesick,' ses Cromwell.

"'So am I,' ses the Devil, 'and disappointed too. Europe is in a bad way, God help us!'

"'Indeed it is, and I don't think we ought to tell Napoleon anything about what we saw."

"' 'Twould only spoil his conceit to think that the world could be in such a condition and he not there to share in the glory.'

"' 'Tisn't talking about Napoleon I'd be, if I were you. Sure it's yourself has fallen on evil days. You thought that you could have a nice quiet holiday for yourself in Europe, but your nerves couldn't stand all the horrors of the war, so you must needs hurry home to recuperate and look after your own people,' ses Cromwell.

"'I can stand as much as you at any time,' ses the Devil.

"'Well, you must not have read the history of Ireland,' ses Cromwell.

"'And if I didn't, do you think I'd have you

for a companion? I'm as good a man as you ever were,' ses the Devil.

"'You may be as good,' ses Cromwell, 'but I'll acknowledge no superiority from you or any one else.'

"'It don't look well for us to be quarreling, Oliver,' ses the Devil.

"'That's true. We should always be a source of comfort and consolation to each other. And we will, too. Indeed, it isn't fair to us to have Ireland as she is these times.'

"'What's wrong now?' ses the Devil.

"'Wisha, nothing in particular,' ses Cromwell.

"'Ireland has always been a great bother to myself and England,' ses the Devil.

"'She has never helped us, more's the pity,' ses Cromwell.

"'And 'tis yourself made a great impression on the minds of the Irish people,' ses the Devil.

"'Indeed and I did,' ses Cromwell, 'and on the English people too, and sure there's no one better known at home than ourselves.'

"'Well,' ses the Devil, ' 'tis said that a man

only gets as much as he deserves, except when he's married. And no man is a prophet in his own country.'

"'True!' ses Cromwell. 'The eaten loaf is soon forgotten, and the English people would forget me if they could.'

"'Don't worry,' says the Devil. 'The Irish will never allow them to do that.'

"'I suppose my memory will be always kept green by the Irish,' ses Cromwell.

"'Of course,' ses the Devil. 'Of course it will. And what greater proof can you have of the inconsistency of mankind?'

"'There's nothing more consistent than man's inconsistency,' ses Cromwell.

"'Except woman's, of course,' ses the Devil. 'Sure I can't understand the creatures at all.'

"I'm glad to hear you say so,' ses Cromwell, 'because if we could understand them, there would be no more surprises left for us.'"

"You have a wonderful memory, Johnny," said Peep, "an' I'll be glad to hear the remainder

of your story when the moon sails over the hills again. I'll be off now, for the sun is rising, and I must be alone to enjoy myself."

"God speed you," ses Johnny. "Two is a crowd when a man's feeling sleepy."

The Valley of the Dead

LARGE dark clouds, lined and fringed with a snowy whiteness, were floating about in a starry sky, when Padna Dan vacated his chair by the glowing hearth, where faggots blazed and a kettle sang, and where his large black dog and small white cat lay asleep and snored in chorus that made a strange harmony with the crackling of the dried oak branches in the grate. When he reached the half door, the moon was hiding behind a rift of cloud; and as he watched it emerge from its hiding place and sail into a starlit region, he up and said:

"Sure 'tis myself that's like the moon, with my goings in and my comings out, and with my exits and my entrances, and the glory that some-

times does be on my brow and the shadows that at other times hide my face. Sometimes not a single thing hinders my progress, from cock-crow to sundown, and other times everything capable of disturbing a man's peace and quiet confronts me at every turn. But, nevertheless, I manage to steer clear of all obstacles and evade all that might upset me in any way, and show a smiling face to the world, like the moon itself."

And then he filled a new clay pipe, that came all the way from France, and was presented to him by his youngest granddaughter, as a birthday gift, and sauntered along the boreen towards the Valley of the Dead. And as he wended his lonely way, without looking to the right or the left, and trampled down the tall grass that the sleeping cows, and the sleeping sheep, and the sleeping donkeys were dreaming about, — the very same tall grass that on the morrow they would greedily feast on, — and as his footfalls startled wandering rabbits, badgers, hares, and foxes, and they roaming from place to place at the dead of night, he only thought of the world beyond the stars

and of those who had gone to dwell there. And so eerie an atmosphere did he create about himself that he might have been a fairy or an elf without care or sorrow for the past or future, but a love of the things that be. And not until he reached the top of a high hill, from which he could see in the moonlight the towering spires of distant churches, where a red light is always kept burning before the high altars, did he stand and rest. And he did not sit down until he found a comfortable seat on a projecting ledge of rock, overlooking a long winding valley covered with larch and beech trees, sloe and crabapple, and all kinds of thorny underwood.

The rising mist, as it spread through the trees along the serpentine course of the valley, seemed like some fabulous monster devouring all that came in its way. And as he sat with his feet dangling in the air, the sound of familiar footsteps caused him to look from the mist to where the sound came from near by. And lo and behold! whom did he see but his old friend Micus. And what he said, before Micus had time to

say anything at all, or get over his surprise, was:

"Well, well, well! Who'd ever think of meeting any one at the dead of night like this? And the stars themselves nearly hidden by the dark clouds, that are drifting about in the spacious and likewise wondrous sky."

"Sure 'tis disappointed as well as surprised that I am, to find any one but myself out of doors, and the whole world on its knees, so to speak, praying for the dead," said Micus.

"This is All Souls' Night, of course," said Padna.

"Or the Night of All Souls, if you will," said Micus. "And sure, 'tis we that are the queer creatures entirely, and we that does be praying for the dead and not caring a traneen about the living, unless, maybe, when we can take advantage of their decency and generosity."

" 'Tis true, indeed, 'tis true! Though 'tis with shame that I must admit it. However, don't leave any one hear you saying so but myself," said Padna.

"And who would hear me at all?" said Micus.

"Well, any one of the people who will be marching down the road when the fairies will go to their homes in the mountains," said Padna.

"And when will that be?" said Micus.

"When the clocks will strike the midnight hour," said Padna. "Then all the dead will arise from their graves, and march along the road to the Valley of the Dead, beyond, and return from whence they came before to-morrow's sun will emblazon the east with its dazzling light."

"I'm surprised at that," said Micus.

"You should be surprised at nothing," said Padna. "That's if you want to maintain a solid equanimity. But hold your tongue for a while, and cast your eye along the valley, and watch the mist gathering on the furze and sloe trees. And in a minute or two, the moon will come from behind a cloud, and the most glorious sight that ever met the gaze of man will unfold itself before you. The mist will soon cover all the trees, and you will see nothing at all but one long serpentine

trail of vapour, into which all the armies of the dead will plunge with a wild fury that will make every hair on your head stand on end and nearly freeze the very marrow in your bones with cold fear."

"And what's all the hurry about; why won't they take their time?"

"They can't," said Padna. "From life to death is but a step, and we must follow some master or be driven by another until the threshold of eternity is crossed."

"I hear the clock of some distant church striking the midnight hour."

"So do I. And I can see the army of the dead approaching!"

"The devil a one of me can see anything or any one, except a fox scampering through the boreen beyond, with a water hen in his mouth," said Micus.

"Look, look," said Padna, as he pointed with the stem of his pipe. "There they come: all the people who dwelt on this holy island since God made the world, and man made mistakes.

I can see them all. There's Brian Boru's army, with Brian himself out in front, and he holding the golden crucifix the same as he carried it to battle when he drove the Danes from our shores."

"I don't see him at all," said Micus.

"Look, there he is mounted on the black charger that trampled and crushed to death the valorous invaders who were foolish enough to come in his way. Look, how he prances and shakes his mane and sniffs the air. He was the King of all the black horses, and when he was shot through the heart by an arrow, his spirit flew away to the world beyond the fleecy clouds, but, as it could never rest, it came back to earth again, and now dwells in all the black horses of the world. And they, each and every one, are pledged to avenge the death of Brian and his war steed. So if ever you see a black horse on a lonely road or crowded street, with a fiery look in his eye, keep out of his way unless you love Granuaile, or he will trample you with his iron hoofs until you are dead."

"I can see neither horses nor men," persisted Micus.

"They are all passing into the valley now, and I can see the soldiers keeping step to the music."

"What are they playing?"

"What would they be playing, but Brian Boru's march, of course."

"I haven't heard a sound."

"Don't you hear the war pipes and the stamp of the soldiers' feet?"

"I hear no sound at all."

"It is most wonderful music. It filled the hearts of the Irish soldiers with courage, the like of which astonished mankind, and drove terror into the hearts of the invaders as they ran to the sea and got drowned. It fills me with courage now, and will instil valour into every Irish heart until the crack of doom. Don't you hear it yet?"

"No, I hear nothing."

"It grows fainter and fainter," said Padna. "The army is now in the valley but 'twill return when winter gives way to spring, and spring gives way to summer, and when summer gives way to

autumn, and when All Souls' Night will come again."

"When the Christmas daisies wither, and when the daffodils and the bog lilies and the bluebell and the hyacinth bloom again, and when the gooseberry and black-currant bushes are laden down with fruit, and when the green leaves turn to brown and the autumnal breeze scatters them on the roadside, we may be dead ourselves," said Micus.

"Hush," said Padna, "here come all the bards and minstrels that loved poor Granuaile, and sang her praises, on the mountain side, on the scaffold, behind prison bars, at home and in distant lands. At morning and at evening, at noon and at night, in early youth and at the brink of the grave. And sad they all look too," said Padna.

"The world is a sad place for those who can see sorrow," said Micus. "Granuaile herself is sad, because for centuries she has lived in sorrow. She weeps for her own sons and the sons of all nations. She wakes with a smile in the morning, but when the dark cloak of night is flung on the

world, her eyes are always filled with tears. And when nobody does be looking, she weeps, and weeps, and weeps!"

"It is for the sins of men she weeps."

"And for the contrariness of women."

"And for the folly of children, whether they be grown up with beards upon their chins, or in their teens and staying up the nights writing love letters for their philandering sweethearts to laugh at and show to their worthless friends so that they may do likewise."

"Granuaile is the Queen of Beauty."

"And of valour, and of purity, and of goodness. All her lovers are coming along the road."

"Is Parnell there?"

"Of course, he's there. And he with a look of melancholy on him that would melt a stone to tears."

" 'Twas Granuaile broke his heart."

"Granuaile would break any one's heart."

"Poor Parnell hated England."

"But he loved Ireland! And never forgot her wherever he travelled."

"The Irish are the great travellers, and it would seem indeed that the world itself is too small for them. Who else do you see?"

"I see St. Patrick himself, and all the holy bishops, and they looking as respectable, and as contented and as prosperous as ever."

" 'Twas they that saved us from Paganism."

"That's so. But 'twas religion that kept Granuaile poor."

" 'Tis as well, maybe. Who'd be rich and with power enough to cripple Christianity, like others, just for the sake of saying that one race or one country was better than another?"

"Man will never get real sense."

"Not until he loses his pride."

"And his arrogance and his selfishness."

"What are you looking at now?"

"I'm not looking at anything in particular, but watching to see my great, great, great grandaunt Helen of Aughrim."

"Who was she?"

"She was the most beautiful of all womankind."

"Maybe she passed by unknownst to you."

"She has not passed yet. I could recognise her by her queenly gait. They say she was the most beautiful woman that ever lived and had as may lovers as Granuaile herself."

"And whom did she marry?"

"No one at all."

"And what is her story then?"

"Listen, and I'll tell you."

"I'll listen," said Micus.

"As I have already told you, for beauty and elegance there was never the likes of Helen of Aughrim, and though every one who laid eyes on her fell in love, she never fell in love with any one at all."

"And who did she like best of the lot?"

"Maurice the Rover. And when he was a young man of three sevens, he up and ses to her: 'Helen,' ses he, 'will you marry me?' But she said she would wed no man, and told him to search the whole wide world for some one more beautiful. So he sailed away that very hour, and for seven years he travelled, and travelled, and

travelled, up hill and down dale, but could find no one more beautiful. And then he returned and told her his story. But all she said when she heard it, was: 'Try again,' ses she. And away over the seas he sailed again, and searched until seven more years had passed away, and he returned again, and he said, 'Helen'; but she interrupted and ses: 'I know what you are going to say,' ses she. 'But all I can say to you, is try again.'

"And so he came and went every seven years, only to get the same answer, and the years passed, and his hair turned white, and his eyes grew dim, and the stateliness of Helen's figure disappeared, and deep lines were on her brow, and once again, he up and ses: 'Helen,' ses he, 'will you marry me?' And for the first time her eyes filled with tears, and she ses: 'You are a faithful lover,' ses she, 'and I will marry you on the morrow.' But when he came on the morrow, she was dead."

"Is that a true story?" said Micus.

"Of course, 'tis a true story. I can see them

now walking along the road arm in arm. And 'tis seven years ago since I saw them before, and 'twill be seven years before I will see them again. But they will walk along the road to the Valley of the Dead every seven years, until the stars fall from the sky and time is no more," said Padna.

"Love is a wonderful thing."

"A wonderful thing, surely."

"And a faithful lover is the dearest treasure of all."

"Without love, there is no life, for its roots are centered in the heart of God."

"Without love the world would wither up, and every plant and shrub and flower would die. And when I die, I hope I will be with my friends."

"And while I live, I hope that I will be with mine."

"Friendship is a great thing."

"Love is greater."

"What are you waiting here for?"

"Nothing at all. The last of the great army

has passed into the Valley, and I will go home and pray for the dead," said Padna.

"And I will go home and pray for the living," said Micus.

"Good night," said Padna.

"Good morning, you mean," said Micus.

The King of Montobewlo

I WONDER," said Padna Dan to his friend Micus Pat, as they strolled along a country road together, "if you ever heard the story of the King of Montobewlo."

"Who the blazes is or was the King of Montobewlo?" said Micus.

"The King of Montobewlo was such a man as you only meet once in a lifetime, and if you will only hold your tongue and keep quiet, I will tell you all about him," said Padna.

"I'll hold my tongue, of course," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna," the King of Shonahulu was getting old and cranky, and the poor devil suffered badly from frost-bite and rheumatics besides; so he up and ses to Hamando, who

was his chief cook and private secretary: 'Hamando,' ses he, 'I think I must have a change in my dietary. What have you for dinner to-day?'

"'I have nothing in the way of dainties,' ses Hamando. 'The last missionary was boiled with the cabbage yesterday.'

"'That's too bad,' ses the King. 'There seems to be a great scarcity of missionaries in these parts lately. I wonder whatsomever can be the reason at all.'

"'There must be some reason,' ses Hamando, 'because there is a reason for everything, even for unreasonable things.'

"'That's a fact, bedad," ses the King, as he killed a mosquito on Hamando's nose with a cudgel, and stretched poor Hamando flat on the ground.

"'Wisha,' ses Hamando, as he picked himself up after the unmerciful clout he got, 'I suppose it must be the way the English people are learning sense at last and keeping them at home to look after the suffragettes, or else that England has as much land as she is able to control.'

"'I don't think that can be the reason,' ses the King. 'What does it matter to England whether she can control a place or not, so long as she owns it. Take Ireland, for instance.'

"'Yes, bedad,' ses Hamando. 'England can blunder magnificently when dealing with Irish affairs. And her wonderful stupidity has lost her not only all the Irish in America, but the Irish in other countries as well. However, the English are a far-seeing and a very polite class of people, and that's why they send out pious and well-meaning missionaries to lay the foundation stones, so to speak, of the Empire beyond the seas.'

"'True,' ses the King. 'And 'tis an ill wind that blows nobody good, as the Devil said when the forty tinkers of Ballinderry were lost at sea. Nevertheless, there's no one likes the missionaries better than ourselves, even though I do say so myself.'

"'Very true, indeed,' ses Hamando.

"'By the way,' ses the King, 'was the last one we had for dinner a Scotchman or a Welshman?'

"'I don't know,' ses Hamando. 'He spoke like a Yorkshireman, but he tasted like a Dutchman.'

"'I'm tired of foreigners like the Dutch,' ses the King, 'and I wouldn't mind having an Irishman for dinner to-day if you could secure one.'

"'I don't believe there's an Irishman to be had for love, money, or an argument,' ses Hamando.

"'Nonsense, man,' ses the King. 'Do you think 'tis in Jupiter or Mars you are? There's only one place where you can't find an Irishman, and you'd find one there too, only the Devil likes to have his own way in all matters. But no more old palaver, and search my dominions at once, and if you can't find an Irishman, I'll make vegetarians of each and every one of my loyal subjects.'

"'I'll do my best to oblige you,' ses Hamando, and away he went to the Prince of Massahala, who was also Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and Secretary for the Colonies, and there and then the Prince gathered his army of ten hundred

thousand men, and searched the mountains, and the valleys, and the caves and the hills, and the towns and the villages, but no trace of an Irishman could he find. And when he returned and told the story of his exploits and adventures to the King, there was never such ructions on land or sea. The King, who was never a man of mild disposition, nearly exploded from the sheer dint of anger, and he up and ses as his eyes bulged out of their sockets: 'Do you mean to tell me that there isn't a single Irishman to be had in all my dominions?'

"'We've searched high up and low down, but couldn't find a trace of one anywhere,' ses the Prince.

"'Was it the way you were all blindfolded?' ses the King, and he looked as though he was about to hand them over to the State Executioner, and order their skins to be sold for making gloves for the ladies of Paris, Ballingeary, and the United States.

"'Are there any Jews within the borders of my territory?' ses he.

"'There are two Jews for every fool in the community,' ses the Prince.

"'Well, then,' ses the King, 'there must be an Irishman about somewhere. And I'm thinking there is a leak in your memory, or else your education was sorely neglected. You should know at this hour of your life, if you know anything at all, that the Irish race was destined by Providence to make things easy for mankind in general, but the Jews in particular.'

"When the Prince heard this, he told his men to get ready for the road, and he marched at the head of his army to where the Jews were located, and sure enough, there he found the one and only Irishman in the whole country, and he brought him before the King. And when the King laid his optics on him, he up and ses: 'Holy smoke and tailors' trimmings,' ses he, 'where did you bring that red head from?'

"'Oh,' ses the Irishman, 'I never even asked myself that question, but I dare say I must have brought it from Denmark.'

"'From Denmark?' ses the King with surprise.

"'Yes,' ses the Irishman; 'twas my great-grandfather's great-grandfather's great-grandfather's father who killed Brian Boru at the Battle of Clontarf.'

"'Is that a fact?' ses the King.

"' 'Tis a solid fact,' ses Cormac McDermot, for that was his name.

"'Well, be the seven pipers of Ballymacthomas,' ses the King, 'that bates Bannagher. The man who killed Brian Boru was no slaumeen, by all accounts. And I like nothing better, when my day's work is done, than to read the exploits of Brian, and his compatriots the Knights of the Red Branch, for herself and the children.'

"'Are you fond of reading?' ses Cormac.

"'There's nothing gives me more pleasure,' ses the King, 'except teaching my chef to cook a Scotchman, and 'tis as hard to catch as 'tis to cook one.'

"'I have heard of a Scotchman who was caught one time,' ses Cormac.

"'When he was dead, I suppose,' ses the King.

"'Yes,' ses Cormac.

"'The time is flying, and a man gets hungry, and angry likewise, and there you are gabbing away, and myself waiting for dinner for the last three hours, and you showing no consideration for me at all. What way would you like to be cooked?' ses the King. 'You must be killed first, of course, though sometimes we does the cooking and the killing together, without as much as wasting a word about it. Howsomever, I am always lenient to the Irish, for I have an English strain in my temperament, and that's why I am giving you your choice in the matter of cooking.'

"'Well, bedad, to tell the truth, I'm not a bit particular about the cooking, but I am a trifle concerned about the killing. And before you will send me to my grave, I would like your Majesty to grant me one request,' ses Cormac.

"'And what's that?' ses the King, as he looked at his watch, for he was getting hungry and impatient.

"' 'Tis that I will be allowed to sing my swan song, so to speak, before I will die.'

"'Sing away to your heart's content,' ses the King. And the words were no sooner spoken than Cormac commenced to sing 'The Valley Lay Smiling Before Me,' and when he finished the last verse, there wasn't a dry handkerchief in the multitude that gathered around.

"'Bedad,' ses the King, 'that was well sung, and we'll have "The Bard of Armagh," now, if you please. 'Twas my poor mother's favourite song.'

"And when Cormac finished, the King shook hands with him and thanked him for his singing and in the same breath said 'good-by' as he was in a hurry to have him cooked for supper. Well, there wasn't much of the fool about Cormac, so he up and ses to the King: 'If I am causing your Majesty any inconvenience, I am sorry, but as one good turn deserves another, I think it is only fair to tell you that whoever eats even the smallest piece of myself, either raw or cooked, will immediately be turned into a tombstone like you'd see at Monasterboice. And after four-and-twenty hours, shamrocks

will sprout on them, and then a great wind will spring up and scatter the leaves of the shamrock all over your territory, and whenever a leaf will fall on any of your subjects, they will be instantly turned into Irishmen, and then may the Lord have mercy on the foreigners.'

"'Is it the truth you are telling, you foxy rascal?' ses the King, and he looks very uneasy too.

"'If you don't believe me, why don't you kill me and find out?' ses Cormac. 'I'm nearly tired of living anyway.'

"The King got the fright of his life when he heard what Cormac said, and never another word did he utter about the killing or the cooking either, but ses he, when he recovered: 'Give us another song,' ses he, and then and there Cormac started 'Then You'll Remember Me,' and the King was so much impressed that he told Hamando to fetch some tea, biscuits, and missionary sandwiches, for he thought Cormac was looking fatigued. And when Cormac ate the biscuits, drank the tea, but refused the sandwiches, be-

cause it was Friday, he thanked the King for his thoughtfulness, and said that he was glad to see His Majesty upholding the true Christian principles by treating his enemies with such consideration. 'Anyway,' ses he, ' 'tis always good policy to be on friendly terms with your enemies, or those who are likely to become your enemies. But always beware of diplomats,' ses he, 'because diplomacy is only a wolf in sheep's clothing.'

"'That's so,' ses the King, as he sharpened a pencil and drew a map of his dominions. 'Now,' ses he, 'I'm going to make you a little present,' and there and then he cut off three-fourths of his country and gave it to Cormac. 'You can plant a hedge of skeeory bushes to divide our lands, and I will now make you King of Montobewlo, in presence of Hamando and myself. And I'll appoint you General Inspector of Cruelty to Animals, Children, and Insects besides. But,' ses he, 'it is absolutely necessary that you should become a real black man first, so you might as well strip off now, and have yourself washed in Injun ink, and you can send your old clothes to

the King of Portugal, because he is out of a job at present, and it may be a long time before he gets one.'

"'I'll be only too pleased to send him my old clothes,' ses Cormac, 'because 'tis only right that kings should help each other, and have benefit societies like the bricklayers, and the market gardeners.'

"Well, when Cormac was washed in a tub of Injun ink, he was the purtiest-looking black man that ever was seen. And when his innumerable subjects saw his bulging muscles and red head, they were so impressed that some of them died of shock, but Cormac, like the decent man he was, had them all buried with military honours. His coronation was the grandest affair that ever was, and when the ceremony was all over, the King up and ses to him: 'Cormac, King of Montobewlo,' ses he, 'how many wives do you want? Three hundred or three thousand?'

"'Ten thousand thanks for your kind offer,' ses Cormac, 'but for the good of my nerves, and my people in general, I think I'll remain a bache-

lor. Of course,' ses he, 'wives are only women anyway, and where there are women there is jealousy, and where there's jealousy there is trouble. Women,' ses he, 'are all right to look at, but they are best when left alone. It will give me all I can do to look after the affairs of state, without bothering or trying to find out which of my wives might be telling the truth. But nevertheless,' ses he, as he took a scissors and clipped several slips of his red locks, 'you can distribute these among the ladies as a token of my regards and friendship. And now,' ses he, 'to show I harbour no ill feelings, if you want any more, I will be only too delighted to give what I can spare for planting on any of my subjects with bald heads.'

"And so the days and the years slipped away, until he got as fat as a cow in clover from eating whales, elephants, and cockroaches. Then great wisdom came upon him, and he up and ses to the King one day, after they searched the whole country for a Jew, and couldn't find one, for they all emigrated to the United States to look after

the Irish: 'Economy,' ses he, 'is one of the fundamental principles of good government, and that being so, let us put it into practice. We are getting old,' ses he, 'and the missionaries come here no longer. And we have eaten all the produce of the land in the way of live stock, but nevertheless our subjects must be provided for. Now,' ses he, 'I propose that all over fifty years of age should be killed, boiled or roasted, as the case may be, according to law, for the maintenance, sustenance, and nourishment of the others. Anybody over fifty years, unless he be a policeman or a king, isn't much good constitutionally or otherwise; and as all our subjects are the property of the government, there is no reason why we shouldn't do what we like with them.'

"'Of course, we can do what we please with them, and I think you deserve a raise in your wages for conceiving such a wonderful idea,' ses the King. 'Not only would we do our people a great justice by providing them with the very best kind of victuals, but we would save them funeral expenses besides.'

"'That's so,' ses Cormac, 'and any true philosopher must know that 'tis better that we should eat each other than that the worms should eat us. Anyway,' ses he, ' 'twill be all the same in a hundred years, as the Duke of Argyle said to the Leprechaun.'

"Well, the new law was duly enforced, and the age limit reduced to suit circumstances, and in less than ten years there wasn't any one left but Cormac and the King."

"Bedad, that's a strange story," said Micus. "I knew that an Irishman could become anything from a poet to a policeman, but I never heard of one becoming a cannibal before."

"Cormac didn't become a cannibal at all," said Padna.

"And how did he escape?" said Micus.

"He escaped by becoming a vegetarian the very day the law came into force," said Padna. "He just wanted to go home to Ireland, and he was afraid he'd have an uneasy conscience, if any of his subjects were left exposed to the dangers of a foreign country, and that was how he

secured peace of mind before shaking the dust of Montobewlo off his heels."

"And what happened to the King?" asked Micus.

"As he was seeing Cormac off by the good ship *Ennisferric* that was bound for Cork's fair city, he slipped off the gangway, and when they went to look for him, they could only find a crocodile in the throes of indigestion," said Padna.

The Dilemma of Matty the Goat

GOD bless all here,'' said Padna, as he pushed open the half-door, and saw Micus sitting by the fireside, reading the newspaper.

"And you too," said Micus, as he turned around and beheld his old friend.

" 'Tis a cold night," said Padna.

"A blighting night surely," said Micus. "The wind is coming from the southwest, and we will have rain before morning."

"Indeed we will, as sure as there are fools in Paris," said Padna.

"Why don't you come in?" asked Micus. "Surely you know your way to the hearth?"

"If I don't, I ought," said Padna, as he walked

in, closed the door, and occupied a vacant chair beside Micus.

"What brought you out to-night, at all?" said Micus.

"Wisha, nothing in particular, except that I have a story to tell you," replied Padna.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Micus, as he placed some faggots and turf on the fire. "Draw closer and get the benefit of the heat, and you will feel better while you are telling the story."

"Thank you," said Padna, as he moved his chair, and then he lit his pipe with one of the paper pipe-lights that lay on the mantel shelf.

"Is it a story of love or adventure that I am about to hear?" asked Micus.

" 'Tis a story of both," said Padna.

"Begin then," said Micus.

"All right," said Padna. And this is what he told:

"Once upon a time, and not very long ago either, there lived a man, a friend of mine, and known to all as one Matty the Goat from Bally-

dineen. He wasn't much to look at, God help us! but he was a remarkable man, nevertheless. He always tried to live in peace and quietness, but he had two wives, and —"

"How could he have two wives in an old-fashioned country like this, might I ask?" said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "his first wife had a bad memory, and she forgot she was married, and one fine day she went away to Australia to see the kangaroos, and remained away so long that Matty thought she was dead, or captured by some traveling showman, to be exhibited in a circus, because she was so ugly and bad-tempered, no one else would think of running away with her. So like all men of susceptible and sentimental propensities, his affection for his first love only lasted until he met the second. Of course, when the years passed, and there were no tidings of his wife, he said to himself that he might as well marry again, and accordingly he did so. Well, lo and behold! he was only about twelve months married, and his second wife was beginning to cut down his rations from three boiled duck eggs

every morning to one small hen egg that a wren would be ashamed to lay, when a great calamity befell him. His first wife came back, and she less attractive looking than ever. But to be sure she made all the excuses and apologies, as only a woman can, for her lapse of memory and thoughtlessness, and there and then she abused poor Matty for not writing to her and sending cards at Christmas and Easter, and he not knowing where to find her at all, no more than a crow could find his grandmother. But to make a long story as short as a bulldog's temper, poor Matty nearly lost his senses between his two wives, and one only more unreasonable than the other, and the two together less reasonable than any ordinary person, who would have no sense at all. 'So,' ses Matty to himself, 'what, in the name of all that's ridiculous, am I to do now? If I'll stay here in the town, I'll be arrested and imprisoned for having two wives, but that itself would be better than trying to please either one or the other, not to mention both. And if I'll run away I'll be arrested for deserting them.

And if either the law of the land, or my conscience had no power over me, and I tried to live with both, I'd be as mad as a March hare in less than a month. Anyway, 'tis a clear case of being obliterated by circumstances over which one has no control. That's the last consolation a man always offers himself when he cannot get out of a difficulty. There is but one thing for me to do now, and that is to commit suicide by ending my life.'

"And when he made that decision he came to me and ses: 'Padna,' ses he, 'I have made up my mind to take the shortest cut to the other world.'

"'Wisha, I don't believe a word of it,' ses I. 'People who have pluck enough to commit suicide usually have too much pride to boast of it beforehand.'

"'Well, you can't boast or talk of it afterwards,' ses he.

"'That's true, too,' ses I. 'But when is the event going to come off?'

"'I can't say for certain,' ses he. 'But 'twill

be as soon as ever I can make up my mind whether New York or Boston would be the best place for me to end my days, and maybe 'tis yourself that could give advice, and tell me what to do.'

"'Bedad,' ses I, 'giving advice is oftentimes as foolish as taking it. However, that's too weighty a problem for a poor man like myself. You must consult some one with more sense. But if I were you, I'd see the King of Spain himself about the matter. He is the one man who I think can help you.'

"'That's a great idea,' ses he. And with that he bid me 'Good day,' and on the morrow he set sail in a full-rigged ship for the sunny land of Spain. And when he reached the Royal Palace, and rang the bell, the King himself opened the door, and he dressed in a smoking cap, and puffing away from a clay pipe that his mother brought from Bantry when she was there for the good of her manners. And before he asked Matty who he was, how he was, or what he wanted, he up and ses: 'Have you a match?' ses he.

"'To be sure I have a match,' ses Matty. And there and then, he struck a match on the heel of his shoe and lit the King's pipe. And when the King thanked him for his kindness, and complimented him on his skill, then ses he: 'Who the blazes are you anyway to disturb a decent man after a hard day's work? I ate no less than five dinners this blessed day and as many more breakfasts, not to mention all the tobacco that I smoked besides, since I got out of bed this morning.'

"'Oh,' ses Matty, 'I am one Matty the Goat. My father kept a tailor's shop at the corner of a street in Ballydineen; I have two brothers policemen in the great United States of America; I have a first cousin married to a schoolmaster in the north of Antrim; five of my ancestors died from the whooping cough, and one of my grand-aunts fell down-stairs and broke her neck; my —'

"'Enough!' ses the King. 'Wait there till I get my autograph book.' And with that he ran up-stairs, and when he came back he handed Matty a mighty book all bound in green plush

and ses: 'Matty of Ballydineen,' ses he, 'put your name down there beside the names of the Emperor of Japan and the King of the Killavullen Islands.'

And when his name was written, the King rang for the Queen and all the children, and in a twinkling they appeared, and they dressed as well as any of the young ladies you'd see selling knick-knacks behind a counter in one of the shops of the big cities. And as they gathered around the King, he up and ses with a solemn voice: 'Ladies and gentlemen,' ses he, 'allow me to have the pleasure of presenting to you a member of the Ballydineen aristocracy, one Matty the Goat.' And when the ceremony of introduction was all over, he sent them up-stairs to get their autograph books, so that Matty could contribute his signature to the long list of celebrities and distinguished personages. The Queen herself was delighted with him entirely, and the King invited him to his private room. And when they were comfortably seated before a good warm fire, he up and ses: 'What in the name of all the

cockroaches in Carrigmacross brought you here, anyway?'

"'A very serious matter, indeed,' ses Matty. 'I came to look for advice. I am a man with no less than two wives, and —'

"'Don't tell me any more till I give you a drop of the best whiskey,' ses the King. And with that he filled a glass for Matty and another for himself, and ses: 'There is only one worse thing that could happen a man, and that is to have three wives, or half a dozen foolish sisters-in-law.'

"'Well,' ses Matty, 'I am about to commit suicide, and the devil blast the one of me can make up my mind whether Boston or New York would be the best place to hang my carcass to a lamp-post, jump off a high building, or throw myself under a motor car going at full speed.'

"'Bedad,' ses the King, 'that's something that requires consideration. But let us talk the matter over. Two heads, like two dollars, are better than one, and 'twas by talking and thinking, and holding commune with each other that the Greeks

achieved so much in the olden times. We will take the case of Boston first. Boston I believe is a great place and 'tis called the Hub of the Universe. Isn't it?'

"'It is, God help us!' ses Matty.

"'I wonder why at all?' ses the King.

"'I don't think that any one really knows,' ses Matty, 'unless that it is as good a title as any other, and maybe somewhat better.'

"'If that's the case,' ses the King, 'now's the chance for some one to make a discovery.

"'A man, I presume,' ses he, 'could live very comfortably in Boston if he had a lot of money.'

"'Indeed, he could,' ses Matty, 'and live there without any money, if he was lucky enough to be a dethroned monarch of some kind or other, or the inventor of a new religion.'

"'The invention of new religions,' ses the King, 'doesn't seem to beget a spirit of communism, nor does it seem to bring us any nearer Christianity in its ideal state. All the same, I suppose a large city like Boston must have a mayor to look after himself and his people.'

"'Of course, Boston has a mayor and an ex-mayor too,' ses Matty.

"'Bedad,' ses the King, 'as sure as there are bones in a sprat, that must be the reason why 'tis called the Hub. And I dare say,' ses he, 'they must have poets in Boston also.'

"'They have,' ses Matty, 'in the churchyards.'

"'That's the best place for them,' ses the King. 'They will be more respected and appreciated there than anywhere else. Besides, 'tis wiser, cheaper, and more cultured to patronize poets and philosophers when they are dead and famous, than to run the risk of being ridiculed for having the wit to recognise them while they are alive. A poet, God help us, seldom does any good for himself, but nevertheless he can always be an advantage to posterity, his relations, and the booksellers, after he is dead long enough to be misunderstood,' ses the King.

"' 'Tis the devil of a thing to be poor,' ses Matty.

"'Not at all, man,' ses the King. 'Poverty,

as the Cardinal said to the Hibernians, is a gift of God.'

'"'A gift of God?'

'"'Yes.'

'"'Well, then, 'tisn't much of a gift,' ses Matty.

'"'No,' ses the King, 'you wouldn't think of comparing it to the gift of stupidity, which is the greatest of all gifts, especially when 'tis accompanied by an optimism that nothing could disturb but the gift of poverty itself.'

'"'But be all that as it may,' ses Matty, 'no one should give anything away for nothing without making sure that they are going to get something for it.'

'"'Well, if that wouldn't make an optimist of a man, nothing would,' ses the King.

'"'What is an optimist?' ses Matty.

'"'An optimist,' ses the King, 'is a pessimist who has acquired the art of self-deception.'

'"'And what is a pessimist then?' ses Matty.

'"'Oh,' ses the King, 'a pessimist is one who has got tired of being an optimist. And now,' ses he, 'maybe you could tell me what is the

difference between an Irishman and an Irish-American?'

"'An Irishman,' ses Matty, 'by reason of the fact that he was born in Ireland and the product of an older civilization thinks he is a better Irishman than the Irish-American; and the Irish-American by reason of the fact that he was born an American and the product of a younger civilization, thinks he is a better German than an Irish-Irishman.'

"'If that is the case,' ses the King, 'I wouldn't advise you to commit suicide in Boston, because there are too many Irish-Americans there. And by all accounts the devil a bit they know or care about the Irish, no more than the English themselves. Now let us consider New York. What is the difference between New York and Boston, I wonder?'

"'There are more tall hats and silk neckties in New York,' ses Matty. 'And a native genius could go to his grave undiscovered there as easily as he could in Boston, while the patrons of art and men of letters would be feasting and entertain-

ing foreign celebrities who don't give a traneen about them.'

"' 'Tis a queer world,' ses the King. 'And sure 'tis a genius you are yourself, and if I were you, I wouldn't commit suicide in either place. Personally, I think Madrid would be as good as any. Howsomever,' ses he, 'I will ask my Lord High Chancellor and his Court of Learned Men about the matter, and if they can't decide between now and to-morrow morning, I will have them all hanged, drawn, and quartered, and advertise for a more efficient staff of attendants.'

"'Bedad, you're a gentleman,' ses Matty, 'and I'm glad to know that you don't show any leniency to your subordinates, because the instant you do so, they begin to think they are as good, as bad, or even worse than yourself, as the case may be.'

"'Treat all those above and beneath you with as little consideration as possible, and you will always be sure of respact,' sees the King.

"'There is nothing like being a fool when you have to deal with foolish people, and to behave

sensibly under such circumstances would only break a man's heart.'

"'I notice that you are talking hoarse,' ses the King. 'Is it the way that you have a cold?'

"' 'Tis a bad cold I have then,' ses Matty. 'And I'm afraid of my life that I may die before I will commit suicide.'

"'That would never do,' ses the King. And then and there he rang for the Queen, and told her to bathe Matty's feet in a tub of hot water, with plenty of mustard in it. And when the Queen had finished drying his toes, the King ordered a good glass of rum for him and ses: 'Matty of Ballydineen,' ses he, 'take this little toothful of sailor's coffee, and bury yourself under the blankets as quick as you can.'

"'Thank you, ever so much,' ses Matty, 'but where am I to sleep?'

"'You will sleep with me, of course,' ses the King. ' 'Twould never do if anything were to happen to you at such a critical time in your life.'

"So Matty slept with the King of Spain that night, but about two in the morning the King

woke Matty with his snoring. Well, that was more than Matty could stand, and he lost his temper and gave the King a poke in the ribs with the heel of his fist, as he ses: 'What the blazes do you mean by depriving a decent man of his sleep like this for?' ses he.

"'Wisha, was it the way I was snoring again?' ses the King.

"'Why, I thought the last day had come, with the noise you were making with that trumpet of a nose of yours,' ses Matty.

"'That's too bad,' ses the King. 'I'll keep awake for the remainder of the night lest I might disturb you again.' And then they started talking about old times and the price of potatoes, ladies' hats, and fancy petticoats. But suddenly the King changed the subject, and ses: 'Tell me,' ses he, 'are the schoolmasters as ignorant, as conceited, and as pompous as ever?'

"' 'Tis only worse they are getting,' ses Matty, 'notwithstanding the cheapness of literature and free education.'

"'I am sorry to hear that,' ses the King. And

so they discussed everything under the sun from bird-catching to cock-fighting until morning came. And when they were called for breakfast, they rushed to the dining-room, and found the Queen and all the children seated around the table waiting for their bacon and eggs to be fried. The King, of course, was duly impressed, and as he sat down, and placed the newspaper in front of the sugar bowl to get a better view of it, he up and ses to the Queen: 'Good morning, ma'am,' ses he. 'What's the good word?'

"'The Lord High Chancellor and all his staff could not decide whether New York or Boston would be the best place for our worthy and distinguished guest to commit suicide, so they all hanged themselves during the night to save you the trouble of having it done to-day.'

"'Well,' ses the King to Matty, 'isn't it a great thing to have men in your employment who can show so much respect for yourself and such consideration for your feelings?'

"' 'Tis always a great pleasure, to get others to do what you wouldn't do yourself,' ses Matty.

"Then the King turned to the Queen and ses: 'They were good faithful servants, but like all of their kind they thought too little about themselves, and too much about those they tried to serve. The man who doesn't consider himself first in all things deserves to be considered last by everybody. Howsomever, they deserved to be buried anyway, so give orders to have them all cut down and sent home to their own people. They have the best right to them, now that they are no more use to any one else. But keep their old clothes and send them to the Salvation Army. 'Tis better, indeed, that the poor should have their overcoats and nightshirts than the moths to eat them.'

"'Of course,' ses Matty, ''tis an ill wind that blows nobody good, but nevertheless, I am as badly off as ever, without one to advise me or to tell me what to do.'

"'Well,' ses the King, 'strictly speaking, when a man doesn't know what to do himself, the devil a much another can do for him. There is nothing cheaper than advice, and oftentimes

nothing dearer, that is, if you are foolish enough to take it from everybody. Looking for advice is only a form of diversion with most people, because we all do what we please in the end. And now, between ourselves,' ses he, 'once a man makes up his mind to marry the wrong woman, all the advice in the world won't save him. And once a man is married, he is no longer his own property. I have done my best for you,' ses the King, 'but the world is full of people who can do as little as myself. Howsomever, I will give you a letter of introduction to my friend the President of the United States, as you are on your way to America, and he may be able to help you.'

"'Thank you very much,' ses Matty. 'I have already been in America, and I have had as many letters of introduction as would paper the house for you, but they were no more use to me than they were to Columbus. No more use, I might say, than a fur-lined coat and a pair of warm gloves would be to the Devil himself. But I am none the less grateful for your kindness.'

"'I am glad you are able to appreciate kindness,' ses the King. 'Because very few people know when they are well treated, or when they are well off.'

"'That's a fact,' ses Matty. 'But 'tis the spirit of discontent that keeps the world moving. The man who is satisfied with himself usually proves unsatisfactory to every one else.'

"'But,' ses the King, 'when a man has the gift of being able to please himself, what does it matter, if he displeases every one else? 'Tis nice, of course, to have a lot of friends, but a man's friends very often can cause him more annoyance than his enemies, and he must endure it to prove his inconsistency. Whereas in the case of an enemy, you can always lose your self-respect by abusing him when you are displeased with his success, and no one will think anything the less of you.'

"' 'Tis only by making allowances and excuses for each other's short-comings and idiosyncracies that we are able to live at all. And if we could see the good in the worst of us as easily as we can

see the bad in the best of us, we might think less of ourselves and more of those we despise. 'Tis only by being better than those who are worse than us that we can respect ourselves, I'm thinking,' ses Matty.

"'Well,' ses the King, 'what the devil a man with as much sense as yourself wants committing suicide for is more than I can understand!'

"'Maybe 'tis as well,' ses Matty. 'The less we know about each other, the happier we can be. Nearly every one of us has some disease of the mind or body that shortens our natural existence. Some suffer from too much conceit, others from a shaky heart, or a loose brain caused by a nagging wife, or too much hard work and not enough to eat, and various other causes, but there is always a reason for everything, even the unreasonableness of those who have no reason at all.'

"'Old talk like this,' ses the King, 'leads nowhere, because no matter how much we may know about art, literature, and music, the very best of us can only be reasonable and sensible when we have nothing to upset us. A hungry

man is always angry, and an angry man is never sensible. On the other hand, a man will make a lot of foolish promises and resolutions after a good dinner, and when he begins to get hungry again he will think that he was a fool for having entertained such decent sentiments.'

"'In a word,' ses Matty, 'selfishness is the normal condition of every one. Some are selfish by being decent, and others by being mean, but strictly speaking, there is very little difference between them, because we all please ourselves, no matter what we do.'

"'I know we do,' ses the King, 'and that's why we incur the displeasure of others. But as we are beginning to get involved and going back to where we started like those who discuss, but can't understand theology, or like the bird who flies away in the morning, only to return to its nest at the fall of night, I think we had better finish, now that we have ended, so to speak, and bid each other good-by.'

"'Surely,' ses Matty, ' 'tisn't the way that you would let me out of doors a cold day like this,

without a bit of a topcoat to shelter me from the cold and wind, and I with a touch of the influenza already?'

"'Well,' ses the King, 'I have had enough of your company, and when we get tired of those who have either entertained, helped, or distracted us, we usually find a way of getting rid of them. The greatest mistake in life is to be too kind to any one. When a woman is getting tired of her husband, everything he does to please her only causes her annoyance. But nevertheless, if she has any sense at all, she can't but respect him for wasting his affection on one not worthy of it.'

"'But what about the topcoat?' ses Matty.

"'You'll get it,' ses the King. 'What's the loss of a topcoat, even though it might be a gift itself, compared to getting rid of a troublesome companion? Besides, a man who has made up his mind to commit suicide must be very careful of himself, lest a toothache, a bad attack of neuralgia, or the 'fluenza might cause him to change his mind. Many a man changed his mind for less.'

"So with those few words the King presented Matty with a new overcoat, and walked with him as far as the garden gate at the end of the Castle grounds, and then he ses, the same as they always say in America, 'Good-by, and call again some time.' But he did not say when."

"That seems to be a polite way of telling a person to go to the devil," said Micus.

"'Tis," said Padna, "but we might as well be polite when we can. And sincerity, unless 'tis accompanied by wisdom and discretion, does more harm than good."

"The world has suffered as much from sincere fools as it has from wise scoundrels," said Micus. "But what did Matty do when he took his leave of the King of Spain?"

"After that," said Padna, "he set sail for Persia, and called upon His Majesty the Gaekwar."

"It was the dead of night when he arrived at the Royal Palace, and without the least scruple he roused His Imperial Majesty from his slumbers. And when he put his head out of the win-

dow and asked who was there, Matty up and ses: 'Come down-stairs and open the door and I'll tell you.'

"So the Gaekwar came down-stairs in his nightshirt, and when he opened the door to let Matty in, he ses, as he frothed from the mouth with the sheer dint of passion: 'Who, in the name of all the conger eels that are sold as salmon, are you, to bring a decent man from his bed at this hour of the night?'

"'I am one Matty the Goat, my father is dead, my grandfather was a protestant who never got any meat to eat on Fridays, and my great-grandfather could jump the height of himself before he was three sevens.'

"'To hell with your father, your grandfather, and all belonging to you,' ses the Gaekwar. 'I can't for the life of me understand why people will bother their friends and acquaintances by retailing the exploits of their own family every time they get a chance.'

"'Well,' ses Matty, 'we think more of our own, of course, than they do about us, and if we didn't

praise them, people might think they were no better than ourselves.'

"'Most people aren't worth praising or remembering anyway,' ses the Gaekwar. 'But that is no reason why you should bring me from my warm bed and have me shaking here like an aspen leaf, and the very stars themselves shivering with the cold.'

"'Sure, 'tis myself that's colder than any star, and I, that had to be out in a raging storm, with wind blowing a hundred miles an hour, and the rain falling and flooding the streets, and every raindrop would fill your hat.'

"'That doesn't interest me in the least,' ses the Gaekwar. 'What I want to know is what brought you here?'

"'I want to know whether 'twould be better to commit suicide in New York or Boston,' ses Matty.

"'Wisha, ten thousand curses, plus the curse of Cromwell on you, for a godson of the Devil, for no one else would try to get another to solve such a problem,' ses he.

"'Tis the way I must have the Devil for a guardian angel, I'm thinking,' ses Matty, 'because I am never out of trouble, God help me.'

"'There are many like you, I am glad to say,' ses the Gaekwar, 'and we are always pleased to find others worse off than ourselves. 'Tis the only compensation we have for being either unfortunate or foolish. Howsomever, come in out of the cold, and we will talk the matter over. But,' ses he, 'you must excuse the untidy condition of the house. The painters and plumbers are working here, and if you know anything at all, you must know what a mess they can make, especially the plumbers.'

"'Indeed, I do,' ses Matty. 'But you needn't make any apologies. I am a man after your own heart and just as humble and maybe as foolish, if not more so.'

"'Nevertheless,' ses the Gaekwar, 'I don't believe 'twould ever occur to me to call on yourself either at the dead of night or the middle of the broad day.'

"'I don't believe it would,' ses Matty.

"'Howsomever,' ses he, 'make yourself comfortable while I'll run up-stairs, and put on my clothes.'

"So Matty drew his chair to the fire, and when the Gaekwar returned, dressed in his new suit and clean collar, Matty ses: 'How is herself and the children?'

"'The children are all right, thank God,' ses the Gaekwar, 'but I am nearly worried to death about herself.'

"'And what's the matter with her?' ses Matty.

"'Oh,' ses the Gaekwar, 'I don't know. She seems to be perfectly happy and contented, and no longer loses her temper, or finds fault with any body or anything.'

"'Bedad,' ses Matty, 'that's a bad and a dangerous sign. Why don't you see a doctor?'

"'I've seen a dozen doctors, but they all say there is no name for her complaint. 'Tis some new disease, and there is no mention of it in the Bible, the modern novel, or the Cornucopia,' ses the Gaekwar.

"'Pharmacopœia, you mean, I presume,' ses Matty.

"'Yes, yes. That's what I mean. You must excuse my ignorance,' ses he, 'because it isn't necessary for me to be as enlightened as the ordinary poor man who must work for his living. All that's expected of one like myself is to be able to read the sun-dial, lay a few foundation stones once 'n a while, review the troops, and eat a lot of good dinners. And now might I ask how is your wife and family, and what made you take it into your head to commit suicide?' ses the Gaekwar.

"'Well,' ses Matty, 'my trouble is just the reverse of yours. You are upset because your wife is contented and happy, and I am upset because my wives are discontented and unhappy.'

"'Your wives!' ses the Gaekwar, with surprise.

"'Yes,' ses Matty, 'I have two wives.'

"'Not another word,' ses the Gaekwar, 'until you will have three glasses of the best whiskey. 'Tis a wonder that you are above ground at all.'

"'God knows,' ses Matty, 'life is a terrible thing sometimes.'

"'Life,' ses the Gaekwar, 'is what other people make it for us. But even at that we should try and be content, more for our own sake than anything else. Fretting and worrying never made any one look young, and nobody would fret or worry at all if they only thought enough and worked hard enough. Some, you know, believe that we lived before, and that this life is the reward for our virtues in the other world. Indeed, some go so far as to say that this may be Heaven, while others think it must be —'

"'If that's so,' ses Matty, 'I'm glad I didn't meet some of the bla'gards I knew before they were born, so to speak.'

"'I imagine,' ses the Gaekwar, 'that a man with as much sense as you appear to have wouldn't buy a house without first seeing it.'

"'Of course not,' ses Matty.

"'Then what do you want to commit suicide for? That's just like buying a pig in a bag. You don't know what you are going to get until

after you have made the purchase. Suicide, for all we know, may be only going from the frying pan into the fire. In a sense, 'tis like exchanging some valuable jewel for a lot of promises. And 'tis my solid belief that none of us know how wicked and foolish we are until we will get a peep at the Book of Records in the world to come. The very thought of that should be enough to keep a man alive forever. If there were as many worlds as there are stars, or grains of sands, then I might be able to understand why a man would want to commit suicide, if he was of a roaming disposition, and wanted to write a book of his travels and adventures. But suppose there is only one world, and that world may be this world, or there may be just another world, and that the next, what then? Anyway, I am surprised at you, an Irishman, not to be able to stand the abuse of two wives after all your race has suffered both from friends and enemies alike for generations. And Ireland's would-be friends, in many ways, have been her worst enemies. However, be that as it may, I would

like to know what you would do if you were like the Sultan of Sparonica, and he with more wives than you could count in a month of Sundays. 'Tis always well to keep what you have until you are sure of getting something better,' ses the Gaekwar.

"'But,' ses Matty, 'suicide is often the fate of a brave man.'

"'No, Matty,' ses the Gaekwar, ''tis ever the fate of a foolish man. Life at its longest is so short that we should all be able to endure it, even when our plans do not work out to our satisfaction.'

"'But when a man loses interest in everything, and —'

"'No man should lose interest in the beautiful things of life. And who indeed will gainsay that life at its longest is too short, especially for a man with a grievance like yourself?'

"'Life is too short to understand women,' ses Matty.

"''Tis easy enough to understand them,' ses the Gaekwar, 'but 'tisn't easy to understand why we go to such trouble to please them.'

"'I'm going to commit suicide rather than try to please them any more,' ses Matty, 'and if I could discover whether New York or Boston would be the better place to end my life, I'd be a happy man.'

"'You might as well die in either place as to jump from the Eiffel Tower, Blarney Castle, Shandon Steeple, or try to swim over Niagara Falls,' ses the Gaekwar.

"''Tis easy to see,' ses Matty, 'that you can't be of any help or consolation to a man like myself. You have too much common-sense to pay any attention to a barking dog, so to speak.'

"'I have, indeed,' ses the Gaekwar. 'You need never muzzle a dog that barks.'

"So with that he shook hands with Matty and ses: 'Good-by, God speed you, long life to you, and may your next trouble be seven daughters. The more trouble we have the less we think about it, and a thorn in a man's toe is nothing to a bullet in his head.'

"After that Matty went to the Czar of all the Russians, and from the Czar to the King of Greece,

and after he had spent years traveling the world looking, in vain, for advice as to whether New York or Boston would be the best place to commit suicide, he returned home and to his great surprise learnt that his two wives had married again."

"And what happened then?" said Micus.

"Well, of course, he found he was worse off than ever. He could not decide where to commit suicide, and his wives, the cause of all his trouble and entertainment, would never trouble him again. They were too busy troubling some one else. And lo and behold! the shock stretched him on the flat of his back, and when the doctor told him that he had only a month to live, he turned his face to the wall and died."

"He expected to die of old age, like all would-be suicides, I dare say," said Micus.

"Of course he did," said Padna. "He was just one of the many people whose trouble is their greatest pleasure, and who are never happy only when they are annoying others with their own affairs."

Ham and Eggs

WISHA, in the name of all the nonentities that a man meets at a fancy dress ball, or a lawn tennis party," said Padna to Micus, as he saw him holding a lantern over a pool of water, on a dark night, at the crossroads of Carrignamore, "what are you doing, at all, at all?"

"I'm looking for the moon that was here in the pool, less than an hour ago, and a more beautiful moon was never seen in any part of the whole world," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "if 'twas twice as beautiful, and twice as large, and the size of a Chinese sunshade inself, you'd have no more chance of finding it on a dark night like this, than you'd have of finding a circus at the North Pole, or discovering why women will worry about their husbands when they stay out late at night, and

then abuse the devil out of them when they come in, even though they had to stay out through no fault of their own."

"What you say may be true," said Micus, "but 'tis better a man should have an interest in astronomy or something else, and go looking for the moon in a pool of water at the crossroads, than have no interest in anything at all, except killing time talking about the wars of the world, or the ways of his neighbours. And sure if a man couldn't find the moon inself, he might find something else while he'd be looking for it."

"Bedad, and that's true enough too! Many a man found happiness when he went looking for trouble, and many a man found trouble when he went looking for happiness, and a man often found a friend where he expected to find an enemy, and found an enemy where he expected to find a friend," said Padna.

"In a word, we go through life looking for what we can't find, and finding what we didn't go to look for. Think of poor Columbus, and what he found, and he not looking for America,

at all. Sure, that sort of thing would encourage any one to set out on a voyage of adventure, even though he mightn't know where he'd be going to, or what he might be doing," said Micus.

"Talking about findings and losings, and strange happenings in general, I wonder if you ever heard tell of the bishop who took off his hat to a poor man," said Padna.

"I did not, then, and I don't believe a word of it either," said Micus.

"Oh, bedad, whether you believe it or no, 'tis a fact, then, nevertheless," said Padna.

"Well, it must have been a mistake of some kind, or maybe an accident. 'Tis possible, of course, that His Lordship took off his hat to leave the air to his head when the poor man was passing, but I can't imagine that he removed it for any other purpose, unless, maybe, a wasp, or a fly settled on his bald crown. In that case he would take off his hat to scratch his head," said Micus.

"If you don't believe what I'm telling you, there's no use going on with the story," said Padna.

"There is not then. But surely," said Micus, "you must have something else to relate, and I not to lay eyes on you since Monday was a week."

"I have another story, if you'd like to hear it," said Padna.

"Of course, I'd like to hear it. What is it all about?"

" 'Tis all about a pig and a clucking hen," said Padna.

"Let us take the shortest cut home, and I'll listen to the story as we walk along. And 'tis glad I am that I went looking for the moon, this blessed night, else I mightn't have found yourself, and I dying to have a talk with some one," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, as he sauntered leisurely along with his friend Micus, who kept swinging a lantern, "on my way home from market yesterday evening, as the sun was sinking behind the hills, I strolled along the road that leads to Five Mile Bridge, and I felt so tired after the journey from Cork to Ballinabearna that I was compelled to say to myself: 'Padna,' ses I, 'why the devil

don't you be sensible once in a while, and take a rest for yourself when you feel tired? What's the use in wearing yourself out, and causing yourself unnecessary pain and torture, when in a few short years you will be as dead as decency, or disinterested kindness, which is no less than one and the same thing. And once you are dead, you are dead for ever and ever, and no one will bother their heads about you, or care whether you lived or not, or just existed, by trying to please every one but yourself. The man who tries to please everybody,' ses I to myself, 'won't live half as long as one of the aristocracy, who don't care where the money comes from so long as he has it to spend.' And when all that was said, I then up and ses: 'Padna,' ses I, 'that's good sound advice, and don't forget what I have told you.' And then and there I made one jump and landed on top of a ditch, and as I looked over my shoulder into the field behind, what did I see but a pig and a clucking hen, and they exchanging salutations. And then they began to talk and this is what I heard:

"'Good evening,' ses the pig.

"'Good evening kindly and good luck. How are you feeling to-day?' ses the hen.

"'Just about the same as ever,' ses the pig. 'Sure, 'tis a sad world for us all!'

"''Tis, God help us!' ses the hen. 'But don't start me crying again, this sorrowful day, for 'tis myself who has shed a bucketful of tears, since my poor grandmother was choked this morning.'

"'I wouldn't be crying about that, if I were you,' ses the pig. 'Sure, 'tis as good to be choked as to have your head cut off with a rusty knife.'

"' 'Tisn't about that in particular that I have fumed and worried, and wept so copiously,' ses the hen.

"'And about what then?' ses the pig.

"'About everything in general. The ingratitude of man, the presumption and assumption of women, and the consumption of ham and eggs,' ses the hen.

"'Ah, wisha, God knows,' ses the pig, 'you couldn't waste your tears over a more worthy

and likewise unworthy object. And like the pessimist that I am, myself, 'tis but little respect that I have for man or woman either. Only for the fact that I have still some pride left, and wouldn't like to disgrace my own family, I'd end my miserable existence by committing suicide, and drown myself in the horse pond.'

"'If you were to do the likes of that, you would sin against tradition, and only be sold as sausages. Whereas, if you were to die a natural death by strangulation, amputation of the head, or bisection of the windpipe, you would be sent to the best butcher's shop in the town, and the different parts of your anatomy would be sold at the very highest rates, the same as all your family, relations and ancestors,' ses the hen.

"'Don't mention my family or my ancestors to me. They were all snobs, each and every one of them,— father, mother, sisters, and brothers. 'Twas little respect they ever had for myself, and always said that I was only fit to be used for sausages, anyway. As though, indeed, I didn't come of as good a stock as the best of them.'

"'I often heard that you came of very respectable people,' ses the hen.

"'Respectable isn't the name for them belonging to me. There were gentry, and no less, in our family.'

"'Is that so?' ses the hen.

"'Yes, indeed, it is,' ses the pig. 'Twas a piece of my great-great-great-great-grandfather's great-grandfather that gave Napoleon indigestion before Waterloo. And that's how he lost the day by giving wrong orders to his generals,' ses the pig.

"'And 'twas from eating a bad egg,' ses the hen, 'that King George got the hiccoughs, and fell from his horse while reviewing his troops in France. And that's how he won the Victoria Cross and got a rise of two and tuppence a week in his wages. Howsomever, be that as it may, 'tis a pension yourself should have from the German and English Governments, instead of earning your living by eating yourself to death, so to speak. An aristocrat of your social standing should be living on some one else's money, and your time should

be divided between sleeping and eating, like all the other members of the fraternity.'

"'Oh,' ses the pig, 'my associates and equals wouldn't think of recognising me, unless I was fully dressed for dinner at some fashionable hotel or restaurant.'

"'Fully dressed!' ses the hen. 'With bread crumbs on your hind quarters, you mean?'

"'Yes,' ses the pig.

"'Well,' ses the hen, 'I come of good stock myself. The members of my family always supplied eggs to the King of Spain, the Mayor of Boston, and the Royalty of England and America.'

"'Wisha,' ses the pig, 'what are a few eggs, even when they are fresh inself, compared to a fine ham, two pork chops, a soft crubeen, or a flitch of bacon, boiled down with plenty of cabbage, and set before a battalion of hungry policemen on a cold winter's day?'

"'Oh,' ses the hen, 'no one would think of eating bacon and cabbage all the time, while eggs are always in season. But 'tisn't quarreling about such a trifle that we should be, when we

have no great grievance against ourselves, but against mankind in general.'

"'The inconsistency of mankind is disgusting, to say the very least of it,' ses the pig. 'Every one from the king to the beggar has a bad word to say for the pig. We stand for all that's contemptible, loathsome and vile, and yet the most delicate and refined people will always call for ham and eggs, in the morning, in preference to anything else. And if one of those genteel young men who might have had my poor grandmother's liver for supper, was to meet myself on the road, and he with a young lady by his side, and she as fond of ham and eggs as himself, neither of them would bid me the time of day, or ask how I might be, or say as much as go to Belgium, or anything at all, but make disparaging remarks about my idiosyncracies.'

"'And think of myself,' ses the hen. 'I that have laid more eggs than you could count in a lifetime, and I have reared five large families, besides. And the day I can't lay any more, I'll be killed by some caubogue of a churn boy,

and sold to some landlady who boards tramps, navvies, and all kinds of traveling tinkers. I wouldn't mind inself if I went to nourish and sustain some decent people, who could appreciate the tender parts of my constitution. Or if I could be like my poor father, who was killed with a new razor, stuffed with bread and currants, roasted on a spit, and exhibited in a shop window before Christmas.'

"'Ah! we live in a thoughtless and heartless world!' ses the pig.

"'I know it,' ses the hen. 'Only about one in every ten thousand has either the power or the privilege of thinking for themselves.'

"'Everything seems to go by contrary. Take the decent people, — the Jews, for instance. They have no respect for the members of my family, but they are consistent. They wouldn't write their name, or my epitaph, on my back with a hot poker, and make fun of my table manners, and then go home and have pork for dinner and say 'twas worth walking to America for,' ses the pig.

"'Nevertheless,' ses the hen, 'when I think of what yourself and myself does for mankind, and the poor return we get, I feel proud to know that we can be of service to those who don't and can't appreciate us.'

"'Yes, indeed, and so do I,' ses the pig. 'What would life be to most people without their ham and eggs every morning, and the newspaper thrown in. And a cigar never tastes sweeter than after a good feed of spare ribs and yellow turnips.'

"'Or even sausages,' ses the hen.

"'I object to sausages and salt meat in general, because it makes people cranky and disputatious,' ses the pig.

"'Of course,' ses the hen, 'there's no doubt but we do a lot of good, though we have been neglected. And it makes my heart bleed, when I think of the stupidity of man and his perverted sense of honour. After all those years of preaching and reform, no poet has ever written an ode to a hen or a pig, and all the poets liked their ham and eggs. There was Shakespeare himself, — people thought he forgot nothing, or what he

forgot wasn't worth remembering, but where's the mention of either hens or pigs in all his highly respected works?'

"'Tis no wonder there is war in the world to-day,' ses the pig.

"'Indeed it is not, when married men will spend all their money on finery for their wives, so that they can look better than they really are, and elope with other women's husbands. Sure, only for the motherly instinct that's in myself, I would leave my family of ducklings and die by my own hand, but I don't want one of them to be neglected and feel the pangs of adversity, like yourself and myself,' ses the hen.

"' 'Tis instinct rather than reason that guides most people. If we were always to act reasonably, people would think we had no sense, at all. However, there's a compensation in all things, and we can enjoy ourselves in our own old way. And while it is a great consolation to know that we can do a lot of good, it is a greater consolation still to know that we can do a lot of harm as well,' ses the pig.

"'Like myself, you share the same sentiments as all good and pious people. The satisfaction of doing harm is the only enjoyment some of us receive for doing good, when our kindness is not appreciated,' ses the hen.

"'When I think of all those who suffer from dyspepsia after eating my friends and relations, I ses to myself: "Well, things could be worse even for such as my humble self. You mightn't have the satisfaction of knowing that there was such a thing as indigestion." And when I think of what people must pay for pork chops, in a restaurant after the theatre at night, and how they must suffer from cramps, pains in the stomach, and a bursting headache next morning, well then I feel as happy as a wife when she is abusing her fool of a husband for giving her too much of her own way,' ses the pig.

"'And when I consider the little nourishment there is in cold storage eggs, and the price the poor lodgers must pay their landladies for them, I feel like dancing a jig on a milestone. And whenever I hear of some one eating a bad egg,

disguised by frying it hard in margarine, and seasoning it with salt and pepper, I takes a holiday for myself. Ptomaine poisoning is as good as cramps, or pains in the head, at any time,' ses the hen.

"'Of course, when we are really hungry, we don't care what we eat. I have eaten pieces of my relatives and friends dozen of times, when they were mixed with my food, but to tell the truth it never gave me any trouble. And in many respects I am no better and no worse than those who don't care how they make their living, so long as they have what they want,' ses the pig.

"And then two farmers came on the scene, and one ses to the other, as he pointed to the pig with a stick: 'How much do you want for the beast?' ses he.

"'As much as he will fetch,' ses the owner.

"'One would think 'twas a work of art you were trying to dispose of,' ses the man with the stick. 'I'll give you the market price and not a ha'penny more.'

"'Very well,' ses the owner, 'I'm satisfied.'

"'And what do you want for that old hen?' ses the man with the stick.

"'Oh,' ses the owner, 'she is no more use to me, and for that reason I must charge you ten or a hundred times her legitimate value. She is an antique. You can have her for ten shillings, and be under a compliment to me for my decency, besides.'

"'I'll owe you the money,' ses the man with the stick, 'so that you won't forget your generosity.' And with that they walked away, and I jumped off the ditch and turned home," said Micus.

" 'Tis a queer world," said Padna.

"A queer world, surely!" said Micus.

The White Horse of Banba

"COME in, come in, and make yourself at home; for the flowers of spring couldn't be more heartily welcome," said Micus Pat to his friend Padna Dan, as he held the latch of his cottage door. And when Padna crossed the threshold, Micus turned from his place by the hearth and said: "Close the door, take off your topcoat, and pull the blinds, while I will heap logs and faggots on the fire, for 'tis five feet of snow there may be on the ground before morning, I'm thinking. And who knows but the house itself may be covered up, and we may not be able to move from where we are for days and days, or a week inself."

"True for you," said Padna. "We never know what good luck or bad luck the morrow may

have for any of us. Howsomever, 'tisn't grumbling we should be about anything, but take things as they come. The storm rages furiously without, and to-night, for all the wisest of us can tell, may be the very last night of the world. The end must come some time, and when the sun rises on the morrow, this earth of ours, with all its beauty and all its mystery, and all its splendour, may be reduced to particles of dust, that will find its way into the eyes of those who dwell on other spheres. If the gale continues, the world will be swirled from its course, and 'twill surely strike some weighty satellite of the sun or moon with a mighty crash, and that will be the end of all joy and sorrow. Then the king will be no more than the beggar, and the beggar will be as much as the king."

"I will place the kettle on the hob," said Micus, "for 'tis true courage we will want to put into our hearts with a good drop of poteen this blessed night. And a drop of poteen is a wonderful thing to drive away the melancholy thoughts that haunt and bother so many of us. We can

fill glass after glass of steaming punch, until the jar in the cupboard is empty. For what is life to some but so many glasses of poteen, the best whiskey or brandy, or wine all the ways from France itself, and so many meals of food, a few good books to read, and maybe a congenial friend or two."

"Life is a rugged and a lonely road, but flowers always grow on the wayside," said Padna.

"And when you try to pluck a flower, 'tis a thorn you will find in your hand, maybe," said Micus.

"That is so, indeed. But let us forget the pitfalls that await us at every turn, and while the wind blows let us fill our pipes and fill our glasses, and sing a merry song if we should feel like doing so, for there is no use looking for the Devil to bid him good-morrow until we will meet him. And the best thing to do when he appears in person, or in disguise, is to pass him by the same as if he was no relation of yours at all," said Padna.

And then Micus heaped dried faggots and

logs on the glowing hearth, and as they crackled and blazed, red sparks flew up the chimney, and the shutters of the windows, and the latch of the door, and the loose tiles on the ridge, and the loose slates on the gable, shook and rattled, and trees were uprooted, and slates were blown from the roofs of houses and so was the golden thatch, and havoc was wrought in the city, the town, and the hamlet, on the mountain side, in the valley, and by the seashore. And as Micus and Padna settled themselves comfortably in two armchairs, the white dog and the black cat drew closer to their feet, while a thrush in his large white cage made of twigs, and a linnet in his small green cage made of wires and beechwood, closed their eyes and buried their heads beneath their wings.

Flash after flash of lightning lit up the darkened countryside, and each peal of thunder was louder than its predecessor, and at times one thought that the whole artillery of hell with the Devil in command had opened fire, and that the fury of the elements would send all to perdition. But Padna and Micus looked on unperturbed at

the crackling faggots. And as the first glass of warm punch was raised on high, Micus up and said: "Here's good luck to us all, the generous as well as the covetous, for 'tis little any of us know why we are what we are, or why we do the things we do, and don't want to do. And as we can't always be decent, we might at least be charitable when we can."

"But alas! alas! we seldom think before we act, and usually act without thinking, and that's why there are so many strange doings and happenings," said Padna. "Be all that as it may, neglect not your duty as my host to-night, and take charge of the decanter, and keep my glass well filled with punch, and my pipe well filled with tobacco, and I will tell you a story that may set your heart beating against your ribs, and your knees knocking together, and your hands may shake till the tumbler will fall from your fingers, and your teeth may rattle until the pipe will fall from your mouth."

"Tell it to me, for I'm filled with curiosity to hear a strange tale. And maybe 'tis a story

about some beautiful woman, or the Aurora Borealis, or some monster of the deep," said Micus.

"It isn't either one or the other, but the story of a horse," said Padna.

"A horse, is it?"

"Aye, the White Horse of Banba," said Padna.

"And how came you to hear it?" said Micus.

"It was an old man of dignified bearing, tall and stately he was, with a long flowing beard, clear grey-blue eyes, nicely chiseled features, keen wit, and a soft easy tongue, who told me the story."

"And where did you meet him?" said Micus.

"On the high road overlooking the Glen of the Leprechauns, on a starlit night before the moon came up," said Padna.

"On with the story," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, as he lit his pipe, "three weeks ago, come Tuesday, I was strolling along the road for myself by the Bridge of the Seven Witches, thinking of nothing but the future of

the children, when I heard strange footsteps behind me, and on looking over my shoulder, I espied a man I had never seen before. And as our eyes met, he up and ses: 'Good night, stranger,' ses he. 'Good night kindly,' ses I.

"' 'Tis a fine night,' ses he.

"'A glorious night, thank God,' ses I.

"'Indeed it is that," ses he. 'And a night to be appreciated and enjoyed by ghosts, fairies, goblins and hobgoblins, gnomes and elves, owls and barroway-bats, and all the strange creatures of the earth, that does be scared to venture out in the broad daylight, as well as man himself.'

"'There's no doubt whatever about what you say,' ses I. 'And a fine night for any one who likes to walk to the top of a mountain to see the moon rising, the stars twinkling, or for those who like to hear the soft wind blowing through the tall rushes in the bogs, and making music, the like of which would inspire a poet to write verses and have them printed in a book, for women to read and talk about, and hold disputatious arguments on modern poetry,' ses I.

"And so we walked and talked until we came to the great Cliff of Banba, that overlooks the ocean on the southwest coast. And as we sat down to rest our weary limbs, he looked from the sky to a high pinnacle of rock, and ses: 'A beautiful sight is the Cliff of Banba when viewed from the ocean beyond, in a small boat, a sloop, or a four-masted ship. But the most beautiful of all sights is to see the White Horse of Banba himself.'

"'I never heard tell of him,' ses I.

"'Why, you must be a queer man, not to have heard tell of the White Horse of Banba. Now,' ses he, as he crossed his legs, and put his hand under his jaw, 'fill your pipe,' ses he, 'and smoke, and smoke, and smoke until you will drive cold fear from your heart. For the story I am going to tell you this blessed night may turn every hair on your head as white as the drifting snow, and every tooth in your head may chatter, and rattle and fall out on the ground.'

"'Oh,' ses I, ' 'twould take more than the mere telling of a story, no matter how long or how short, or a hundred stories about the living or

the dead to scare or frighten or disturb me in any way, and I a married man for more years than you could count on your own fingers and toes, and herself as stubborn and as contrary as the first day she made up her mind to marry me. So 'tis thinking I am that I will be neither white, nor grey, nor sallow, nor toothless, nor bald maybe, after I have heard the story of the White Horse of Banba; or the Black Horse of Carrigmore, and he that took Shauneen the Cobbler away on his back on a dark and windy night and drowned him in the Lough at Cork, because he was cursed by the widow Maloney for spoiling the heel of her shoe.'

"'God forgive her for putting a curse on any poor man,' ses he.

"'Amen,' ses I.

"'Well,' ses he, 'if you think that you will be neither white, nor grey, nor one way nor another but the way you are at this present moment, I wouldn't be boasting, if I were you, until the story is told. Because once it strikes your ears, you can never keep it out of your mind, whether

you be sailing over the seas in a full-rigged clipper, or walking the lonely roads at home, or in foreign parts. 'Twill be with you when you wake up in the morning, and when you are going to bed at night, and even when you are asleep and dreaming inself.'

"'If 'tis such a wonderful and astonishing story as all that, why don't you write it down, and have it printed in a book?' ses I.

"'Some of the best stories were never written,' ses he. 'And some of the wisest sayings are forgotten and the foolish ones remembered. But once the story of the White Horse of Banba is told, 'twill keep ringing in your ears till the dawn of your doom.'

"'Really?' ses I.

"'Yes,' ses he. ' 'Tis the White Horse of Banba who comes in the dark of the night to carry us all from the Prison of Life to the Land of the Mighty Dead. And 'twas he stole the woman of my heart from me.'

"'Well,' ses I, 'maybe 'tis better that he should have stolen her than some worthless bla'-

guard who couldn't appreciate and treat her decently. There are more married than keep good house,' ses I.

"'That's true, but 'tis no comfort for a man to see the woman he loves the wife of another, unless she might have the devil of a temper, and no taste for anything but gallivanting through the streets,' ses he. 'And only for the White Horse of Banba, I might be the father of a fine large family, who would be able to earn enough to keep me idle in my old age. Then I wouldn't have to be worrying and fretting, when I am walking behind a plough or a harrow, on a warm day, or searching the boreens, the long winding lanes, or the dusty roads, looking for a lost sheep or a wandering cow, and watering the green grass that grows under my feet with the sweat that does be falling from my brow. Not, indeed, that I couldn't have more wives than I'd want. But 'tis too respectable a man I am to ever fall in love with more than one woman. And that's something that very few can boast of, whether they be single or married, inself.'

"'And who told you about the White Horse of Banba?' ses I.

"'I have seen him with my own two eyes,' ses he.

"'Where?' ses I.

"'In this very spot. And I have seen him in every nook and corner of the land from the Giants' Causeway to the Old Head of Kinsale, and as many times as you forgot to keep your promises too, and he with the golden shoes and hoofs of ivory, and a long mane that reaches down to the ground and a neck more beautiful than a swan, and eyes that sparkle like glow-worms when night is as dark as pitch.'

"'And he will carry us all to the Land of the Mighty Dead?'

"'Yes, he will carry each and every one of us to the great country beyond the grave.'

"' 'Tis strange indeed,' ses I, 'that you should see the White Horse of Banba so often.'

"'Some are more favoured than others,' ses he. 'But if you will wait until the lights in the city grow dim, and when the lights in the sky

sparkle and glimmer, and when the birds fall asleep on their perches, and the dogs begin to snore in their kennels, and all the tired people are stretched in their beds, then if you are lucky you may see him passing by here, and he flying through the night, the way you'd see a pigeon racing home, or a meteor shooting through space.'

"'And is it all alone that he does be?' ses I.

"'No. There is always some one on his back, and the banshee follows at his heels, wailing and moaning the way you'd be scared out of your wits.

"'But some people have no wits,' ses I.

"'That's so. But we all dread something. It may be the sea, fire, loneliness, the past, the present, the future, hereafter, a wife with an angel's face and the tongue of the Devil, a rat maybe, or a shadow itself. There's a weak spot in the strongest, and a strong spot in the weakest, even though it might be stubbornness. But there's nothing to make a man more scared than the cry of the banshee that follows the White

Horse of Banba as he gallops along the dreary roads, where the ghosts themselves would be afraid to venture. And he always has some one on his back, holding on to his wavy mane, lest they might fall and be dashed to pieces on the cobbled roadway. Sometimes it does be an old man full of days with toothless gums and white hair that you'd see, and other times some comely maiden, with the virtue of purity and innocence stamped on her brow, and she more beautiful than Helen of Troy or the Queen of Sheba. And oftentimes it does be a little child with rosy cheeks and golden curls, or maybe an infant who just opened its eyes to get one peep at the world, and then closed them forever. It may be a young giant of a man that you'd see, or an old woman, wrinkled and feeble. And as he skelters by, the very trees themselves bow their heads, the corncrakes in the meadows and the toads in the marshes keep still, and you would hear no sound at all, except the clattering of hoofs on the stony roads and the wailing of the banshee. 'Tis along this very road that the White Horse

comes at the close of night and the birth of morn, and he races with the speed of the lightning flash, until he comes to the top of the cliff beyond, where he stands for a little while, sniffs the air and shakes his mane, turns his head and gives a knowing look at whoever does be on his back. Then a weird whinnying cry is heard, and he plunges into the sea, and he swims and swims through the surf and billows until he reaches the edge of the moon that does be rising out of the waters at the horizon. As quick as thought he shakes the water from his mane, stamps and prances and jumps from the top of the moon to the nearest star, and from star to star until he arrives at the Golden Gate of the Land of No Returning.

"'Then he walks through a beautiful avenue, sheltered by tall green trees and made fragrant with sweet blooms, until he is met by St. Peter and St. Patrick on the steps of a marble palace. And the stranger on his back dismounts and accompanies the Holy Apostles into the Sanctum Sanctorum where a record of our good and bad

deeds is kept. And when the record book is found and the stranger's fate discovered, St. Peter looks at St. Patrick, and St. Patrick looks at St. Peter, but no words at all are spoken. Then the stranger is hurried away by an attendant with a flaming sword in his hand.'

"'And where does the angel with the flaming sword carry the poor stranger?' ses I.

"'Nobody knows,' ses he. 'And the pity of it all is that very few care. It was the White Horse of Banba took my father away and my grandfather, and his father and grandfather, and his father before him again, and some night when we may least expect it he will take ourselves, and gallop along like the wind over the highways and byways, through the meadows and marshes, underneath bridges, and over the cobbled tracts on the mountain side. And a terrifying sight it is to see him as he thunders past. He spares no one at all, and takes those we love and those we hate. He stole the woman of my heart from me, and made me the lonely man that I am to-night.'

"'But isn't it a foolish thing for you to remain a bachelor, and the world full of beautiful women waiting to be loved by some one?' ses I.

"'A man only loves once,' ses he, 'and when the woman of your heart is dead who would want to be living at all?'

"'And now that the woman of your heart is dead, why don't you try and forget her when you may never see her again?'

"'Of course I will see her again. Life is but the shadow of eternity, and before to-morrow's sun will flood the East with dazzling light, I will see the woman of my heart.'

"'Where will you see her?' ses I.

"'In a land farther away than the farthest star.'

"'And who will carry you there?' ses I.

"'The White Horse of Banba,' ses he.

"'But he may not pass this way to-night,' ses I.

"'As sure as you will make some mistake to-morrow he will pass this way to-night,' ses he.

"'How do you know?' ses I.

"'We know lots of things that we have never been told,' ses he. 'And you will be wiser to-morrow than you are to-day. The hands of the clock are now together at the midnight hour, and I can hear the clattering of hoofs in the distance.'

"'Maybe the White Horse of Banba is coming,' ses I.

"'He is,' ses he, 'and there is no one on his back this time, for he is looking for me.'

"And as true as I'm telling you, a fiery steed rushed over the hill, and the stranger jumped on his back, and ses, 'Good-by,' ses he, ' till we meet again in the Valley of the Dead on the Judgment Day.'

"And then the White Horse of Banba scampered along the rugged pathway with the wailing banshee at his heels, until the top of the cliff was reached, and before I could realize what had happened, he plunged into the dark waters," said Padna.

"I hope it will be many a long day before either

of us will be taken to the world next door," said Micus.

"I hope so too," said Padna.

"I wonder is the decanter empty," said Micus.

"Not yet," said Padna.

Rebellions

"COME in and sit down by the fire, and don't stand shivering there at the door," said Padna Dan to his neighbor, Micus Pat. "One would think you were afraid to be natural."

"I'm only afraid of myself and my own foolishness," answered Micus. "So I'll go in and sit down. On a cold night, there's nothing like a good fire, a pipe of tobacco, a cheerful companion, and a faithful dog to lie at your feet. 'Tis better than being married a hundred times. Marriage should be the last thought in any sensible man's head."

"Married men," said Padna, "are very tiresome people. They are ever either boasting about their wives and children or else abusing them. And married women are always worse than their husbands. A woman becomes a tyrant

when she knows her husband is afraid of her, and a good wife when she is afraid of him, and when both are afraid of each other the children are afraid of neither. And children that aren't afraid of their parents get married young and always to the wrong people. But as people who want to get married will get married, then let them get married and enjoy themselves if they like trouble. I've been trying to keep out of trouble all my lifetime, and no one has ever failed so successfully," said Micus.

"There's only one way to keep out of trouble," said Padna.

"And what way is that?"

"Well, by either drowning, hanging, or poisoning yourself."

"I'd rather fall from an aeroplane, or die a respectable death and have my name in the papers, than do anything so common as drowning or hanging myself, if I was trying to escape from marrying a widow."

"Wisha, when all is said and done, the longest life is so short that 'tis only a fool, or maybe a very

wise man, that would make it any shorter. When we fall out of the cradle, we almost fall into the grave, so to speak, and unless we are either very bad or very good, we're forgotten before the grass commences to sprout above us."

"A graveyard is a great place surely, for grass to grow and flowers to bloom, and for ghosts to take the fresh air for themselves, but the last place to go for a rest."

"And the only place for a poor man. Because there's no rest in life, except for the very stupid people and the philosophers."

"And what's the difference between a stupid man and a philosopher?"

"The stupid man is naturally easy in his mind because of his wonderful gift from providence, and the philosopher pretends that you are a wise man, when you know that you are only one of the many poor fools sent astray in this world, without the least notion where your wandering footsteps may lead you to, or your preaching lead others."

"And isn't it philosophy that keeps the world together?"

"No, 'tis not philosophy, but pride, and pride that pulls it asunder, and pride that makes hell and heaven. Pride is the net that the Devil goes fishing with."

"The world must be full of fools then, because I can't understand myself or any one else, and I never met any one who could understand me."

"If a man could understand himself, he'd die of wisdom, and if he could understand his friend, he'd become his enemy."

"And what would happen if a man could understand his enemy?"

"Well, then, he'd be so wise that he'd never get married."

"We'll try and forget the women for a while, and talk a little about the other wonders of the world. There's nothing more extraordinary than the patience of married men. The world is full of wonders, police, clergy, and public houses. But what I do be wondering most about at the close of day is, how did all the stars get into the sky?"

"Well, well, to be sure! There's ignorance for you! Didn't you ever hear tell of the night of the big wind?"

"Of course, I did."

"That was the night the earth was blown about in the heavens the way you'd see a piece of paper in the month of March. She was carried from one place to another, until, lo and behold! she struck the moon a wallop and shattered her highest mountains into smithereens, and all the pieces that fell into the sky were turned into the stars you see floating about on frosty nights."

"And did she strike the sun at all in her travels?"

"How could the earth strike the sun, you omadhaun?"

"It should be as easy to strike the sun as the moon, but how she could strike either is more than any one will ever be able to understand, I'm thinking."

"'Pon my word, but you're the most ignorant man one could meet in a year of Saturdays. Don't you know that the sun is a round hole in

the floor of Heaven through which all the fairies and politicians fell the night of the rebellion?"

"And was there a rebellion in Heaven?"

"Wisha, what kind of a man are you not to know all these things? Sure, there's rebellions everywhere."

"What kind of a rebellion do you refer to?"

"Well, there are only two kinds, though there's no difference between them."

"And what are they?"

"Rebellions with a reason and rebellions without a reason."

"And why should there be rebellions at all?"

"Well, because when people get tired of being good they become bad, and when they get tired of being bad they become good."

"I hope I'll never be in a rebellion," said Micus.

"Rebellions are the salt of life," said Padna. "Only for the rebellion in Heaven, we wouldn't be here to-day enjoying ourselves at the expense of our neighbors. Don't you know that we are to take the place of the fallen angels and that we must win the respect of St. Peter and St. Patrick

by our courageous behavior? I'm never happy only when I'm in the thick of battle, and the only music that charms me is the thunderous cannonading of the enemy. That's the time that I have the courage of a lion, the grace and power of an elephant, and the fire of hell withal in my eye, ready to conquer or die for my convictions. The man who can't feel and act like a hero should — What noise is that?"

"Only your wife scolding some one outside the door," answered Micus.

"'Tis her voice, surely. Then be off with yourself by the back door, for 'tis ten by the clock, and mind the dog in the haggard while I'll put out the light and go to bed," said Padna.

Kings and Commoners

"WELL," said Padna, as he rested his elbows on the parapet of Blackrock Castle, and watched the river Lee winding its way towards the ocean, "when I look upon a scene so charming as this, with its matchless beauty, I feel that I am not myself at all, but some mediæval king or other, surveying my dominions, and waiting for the sound of the hunter's horn to wake me from my revery. If at the present moment, an army of chivalrous archers, with white plumes in their green hats and bows and arrows slung on their shoulders and Robin Hood himself at their head, were to march from out the woods at Glountawn, I wouldn't utter the least note of surprise or exclamation. No, Micus, not a single word would I say, even though they might lay a herd of slaughtered deer at my feet, and pin a falcon's

wing on my breast; so much do I feel a part of the good old days when there was no duty on tobacco and whiskey."

"Sometimes," said Micus, "I too feel that I own the whole countryside, and in a sense I do. Because I can get as much pleasure from looking at it, and admiring all its dazzling splendour, as if I had the trouble of keeping it in order and paying rates and taxes. And after all, what does any of us want but the world to look at, enough to eat and drink, and a little diversion when we feel like it?"

"A man with imagination and insight," said Padna, "need never want for entertainment, because he can always appreciate and enjoy the folly of others, without having to pay for it. But be that as it may, 'tis more satisfying still to have a love of nature and all that's beautiful, and a healthy distaste for all that's coarse and ugly."

"The world is made up of all kinds of people, who want to enjoy themselves in some way or other," said Micus, "and the spirit of destruction is the Devil's contribution to human happiness.

Why, man alive, you could drown the whole German Army, and the Kaiser and all his henchmen, in the depths of beautiful Lough Mahon that stretches before us, and the French wouldn't feel the least sorry. And you could drown the whole French Army and General Joffre, and the Germans wouldn't feel sorry. And you could drown Sir Blunderbluff Carson, and John Redmond wouldn't feel sorry, and you could drown the Russian, French, English and German armies, and the socialists wouldn't be sorry, and you could drown all the socialists and the Salvation Army, and the Devil wouldn't be sorry."

"All the same," said Padna, "'twould be a pity to wound the dignity of the Kaiser by drowning him in a comparatively small and shallow place like Lough Mahon when he could be drowned just as comfortably and easily in the middle of the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, — or the Dardanelles, for that matter. And as for all the trouble 'twould give the Russians, you could tie him by the heels to a clothesline in your back yard, the way they tied the tails of the Kilkenny cats, and

dip his head in a bucket of goat's milk mixed with gunpowder, and let him drown that way."

"There's good and bad in the worst of us," said Micus, "and I am sure the Allies would be sorry to have him drowned at all, when he could be given, for his own private use and benefit, a superabundance of everlasting peace tokens, such as they give the poor devils in the trenches."

"Free samples of poisonous gas, you mean, I presume," said Padna.

"Yes," said Micus. "However, 'tisn't for the likes of us to be discussing the ways of mighty monarchs when we are only poor men ourselves."

"Hard work," said Padna, "never killed the gentry."

"No," said Micus, "nor decency either, and if they were to eat twice as much, 'twouldn't make them any better."

"When you come to think about it," said Padna, "'tis the hell of a thing why a man should have to work for himself, or have to work at all."

"Indeed it is, and I always lose my temper

when I think of the poor men and women, too, who must get up when it is only time to be going to bed, and work until they fall on the floor from sheer exhaustion and no one to care or bother about them. Sure, there must be something wrong, if that sort of thing is right, and the gentry should be ashamed of themselves for making such conditions possible and they doing nothing but spending money that they never earned, and making laws for the poor."

"'Tis disgusting," said Micus, "to think that we should have to work for any one, even though they might be the Prince of Wales, or the Duke of the North Pole himself."

"I can't see for the life of me," said Padna, "why we couldn't make our living as easy as the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the insects of the field, or the policemen. Sure, when you come to think of it, a king is no more than any other man, only for all the fuss that does be made about him. And I don't see why one man should be thought better than another when he isn't. Only for the fine clothes that some of us wear,

no one would take the least notice of us, and if you were to put a dead king and a dead duke, and yourself and myself beside each other, Micus, on the top of the Galtee Mountains, and exposed our carcasses to the rains and the snow, not to mention the southwesterly gales, for three months, when the experts would come along to identify us, 'tis the way they would think that you were the duke and I was the king, and the duke was no one but yourself, and who could the king be but myself."

"And maybe 'tis the way that they would think that you were only the duke, and that myself was the king," said Padna.

"'Tis true, of course, that a king is no more than one of ourselves when he is dead, but there is no doubt about him being a good deal more when he is alive. Nevertheless, it would be a proud thing for the Padna Dan family to have one of their kinsmen buried with the pomp and ceremony of a mighty monarch, and they never to produce anything more than birdcatchers and bowl players. Yes, Padna, 'twould be a great

thing entirely, and ye that always lived in a house that you could put your hand down the chimney and open the front door, if you forgot your latch-key. The mistake would never be discovered till the Judgment Day, and then you'd rise from your grave, glorious and triumphant with a crown of shiny jewels on your head, and a royal sceptre in your hand, and a robe of state that would cover you all over, and you looking as happy and contented as though you were used to wearing overcoats all your lifetime."

"And what about yourself, Micus," said Padna, "and you with a red cap on your head, like the dukes wear on state occasions, and a snowball in one hand and a bear's claw in the other, the way the people would think you were the Duke of the North Pole and not yourself at all?"

"All the same," said Micus, "I'd rather be a duke at any time than have to work for a living."

"So would I," said Padna. "And in that sense, we only echo the true sentiments of every demo-

crat. Yet, when I was a young man, I never bothered my head about royalty, but I was as full of wild fancies as a balloon is of wind. And there wasn't one from the Old Head of Kinsale to the Giants' Causeway more headstrong and intolerant than myself."

"I believe every word of that," said Micus.

"Like other temperamental and idealistic people, I naturally felt very disappointed and likewise disgusted with the existing order of things, and there and then I ses to myself: 'Padna Dan,' ses I, 'the world is in a wretched condition and badly wants a great reformer.' So with that I appointed myself mediator between good and evil, and indeed, at first I thought it would be possible to form some kind of compromise between those two giant forces that have kept the world in awe ever since Adam was a boy. But subsequently I decided that the best and only thing to do would be to rid the world of evil altogether."

"And how could that be done at all?" said Micus.

"Well, as I was filled with the enthusiasm and ignorance of youth, I tried to make up my mind whether I would follow in the footsteps of Savonarola, St. Francis, or St. Patrick himself, but when I thought of what happened to Savonarola, and after all these years we don't know whether St. Patrick was a Scotchman or an Irishman, but principally when I took into consideration my own strong sense of personal comfort, and my insignificance withal, when compared to greater men who have suffered so much and accomplished so little, I finally decided to leave the regeneration of mankind to the suffragettes or some one else."

"You're a philosopher," said Micus, "but I'm afraid that you will accomplish no more for humanity with your old talk, than a patent medicine advertisement or the police themselves. Sure, every young man with a spark of decency in him must have felt as generous as yourself at some time or other in his life. If we could all reform ourselves before trying to reform others, then there would be some hope for mankind, but generous impulses such as yours, Padna Dan,

are only produced by the assimilation of black coffee or strong tea, or else an innate conceit. When the Lord made the world, he must have known the kind of people he was going to put there. Hence, Padna, the superabundance of people like yourself to be met with everywhere."

"Well," said Padna, "whether we mean what we say or not, we must keep talking. Sure, 'tis talk that keeps the world going, and if we are not dead in a hundred years, we will be very near it, so it behooves us one and all to enjoy ourselves while we are here, lest it may be unwise to postpone our pleasure until we arrive in the other world."

"This world," said Micus, "in a sense, is good enough for me, and I wouldn't object to living on here for ever, if I could, instead of taking a chance with what's to follow."

"Life is a game of ups and downs, and love very often is an accident. If we did not meet our wives, we never would have married them, of course. And if our wives did not meet us, they might have met some one better. And happy indeed is the

man who marries the woman he loves before she marries some one else."

"'Tis sad to think," said Padna, "that when we get sensible enough to appreciate our own folly, the beauties of nature, and the idiosyncracies of our friends and enemies, we find ourselves on the brink of the grave. Yet, we might all be worse off and treated no better than the poor prisoners of Sarduanna."

"We are all prisoners, in a sense, from the very minute we are born, and we may be prisoners after we are dead too, for all any of us know," said Micus.

"That may be," said Padna, "but nevertheless, some of us know how to treat ourselves better than the authorities treat the prisoners of Sarduanna."

"And how are they treated at all? Is it the way they get too much to eat and not enough of work, or too much work and not enough to eat?"

"'Tisn't so much one as the other, but something worse than either. They get nothing to

eat but pickled pork from one end of the year to the other," said Padna.

"And what do they get to quench their thirst?" said Micus.

"Salt fish," said Padna.

The Folly of Being Foolish

"WHAT are you doing there?" said Padna Dan to Micus Pat, as he watched him sifting sand between his fingers as he stood on the shore of Bantry Bay.

"I'm doing what nobody ever thought of doing before and what no one may ever think of doing again," said Micus. "I'm counting the pebbles of Bantry Bay from Dunboy to Glengarriffe. And that's more than Napoleon thought of doing."

"And why should you be doing the likes of that?" said Padna.

"Well," said Micus, "when they're all counted, I'll know more than before and be as famous as the King of Spain himself."

"You might as well be trying to count all the blades of grass from Dunkirk to Belgrade, but you'd be dead and forgotten long before you'd have as much as the ten thousandth part of half of them counted," said Padna.

"What do you know about counting pebbles or the red skeeories that does be on the white thorn-bushes in the month of August?" said Micus.

"As much as any sensible man wants to know," said Padna. "If you want to be really foolish, you ought to leave the pebbles alone, and start counting all the grains of sand in the world."

"I'll count the pebbles first," said Micus.

"'Tis only vanity that makes a man do what every one else is too sensible to do," said Padna. "But 'tis better to be foolish itself and get married than to be so vain that you don't know you're foolish."

"And why should I get married?" said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "a man's wife is always a great comfort to him when he wants to get fed, when he's sick in bed and requires nursing, or when he's too well off and suffers from discontent.

Besides, 'tis a great thing to have a wife to quarrel with when you're afraid of quarreling with any one else."

"And why should I quarrel with my wife without reason if I had one?"

"Abuse, you know, is the great safety valve that keeps the world from exploding, and if you won't abuse your wife, she'll abuse you," said Padna, "and isn't it better to be first than last in anything?"

"I don't think so," said Micus. "I'd rather be the last than the first man to meet a widow looking for a husband."

"And why?" said Padna.

"There's no escape from widows," said Micus, "whatever accidents might happen with inexperienced young women."

"There's something in what you say," said Padna. "Perseverance, pugnacity, and stupidity are necessary for success if you aren't cursed with intelligence and good breeding. And you can get any young woman without money to marry you against her will, but if you're wise enough you

won't. I need not tell you that lovers are only sensible when they commence wondering at the foolishness of their own children."

"A man thinking about getting married should have two women to choose from."

"And why, might I ask?"

"Well, because if he lost one he could have the other, and if he lost both he would know what it is to be lucky. Marriage, you know, always makes one master and two slaves."

"'Tis too bad that there should be any slaves."

"It is, but while men will marry for love, and women for money, we cannot expect a change in our social conditions."

"There will be no change in the world while men suffering from indigestion will marry cooks."

"That's a wise thing for a sensible man to do. A cranky and delicate man should marry a nurse, a man always out of employment should marry a dressmaker, and a man fond of quietness and reading should live with a married sister, if she has no children."

"Wisha, after all's said and done, there's

nothing worse nor better than being a bachelor, as the case may be. 'Tis better to be a bachelor, I'm thinking, for you may go to your grave without being disillusioned. But when a man's dead, it doesn't matter whether he was married or not, or shot by an ivory-handled revolver or died from rheumatics."

"A man suffering from rheumatics should be mindful of the westerly gales, and the frosts of winter, and keep from eating salty beef and tomatoes. I think a rheumaticky man should get married, but should not marry a woman with a tendency to gout. And 'tis always well to marry an orphan because there's nothing worse than mothers-in-law, except sisters-in-law, and they're the devil entirely."

"To change the subject," said Micus, "I don't think it is fair to catch lobsters at night. No one wants to be disturbed in their sleep."

"If you look at things like that," said Padna, "you'll never be happy, and though it isn't easy to please myself, I think 'tis a grand thing entirely that all caterpillars are vegetarians."

"I don't think we should waste time talking about caterpillars. They never do anything but eat cabbage and cause gardeners to use bad language. Of course, the history of a buffalo or a butterfly is a wonderful thing, but if elephants were to grow wings we wouldn't take any notice of canaries, bees, or water hens," said Micus.

"I'd give a lot of money to see a flock of elephants flying over the Rock of Cashel," said Padna.

"That would be a great thing for the newspapers and the moving pictures, though perhaps a dangerous thing for people of a nervous disposition," said Micus.

"And 'twould be the devil of a thing entirely if they forgot to fly."

"Nervousness is a curse or a blessing, according to the individual, of course. The evil that some men do lives after them, and the good does be interred with their bones."

"That's true, but when men do neither good nor harm they might as well keep out of politics

altogether. No man is as wise or as foolish as he thinks he is, and if you were to capture all the stray thoughts that does be floating about in your head and put them down in writing, you'd be the greatest curiosity that ever was."

"When a man loses a button," said Micus, "he should immediately sew it on for himself, if he couldn't get any one to do it for him."

"Selfishness is the basis of success," said Padna.

"To give away what you don't want is wisdom without generosity, and to keep what is of no use to you is the worst kind of folly."

"Fighting is a natural instinct, and to fight for what's yours, be it honor or property, is a noble thing, but to fight for what doesn't belong to you is both dangerous and foolish."

"That's so indeed. I saw two crows fighting for a crust of bread that a child dropped in the street, and they didn't cease until both had their eyes picked out."

"And who got the crust?"

"A sparrow who came along while they were fighting, and devoured it."

"Then the crows without knowing it became philanthropists."

"Well, 'tis better to make mistakes if some one benefits by them than to make no mistakes at all. I think I'll go on counting the pebbles and leave you to find a philosophy for yourself," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "when a man can content himself by being foolish, 'tis only a fool that would be a philosopher."

The Lady of the Moon

"TIS a strange thing," said Padna to Micus, as he sat on a boulder in his back garden, carving a dog's head on the handle of a blackthorn walking stick, "that notwithstanding all the millions of people in the world, no two are alike, and stranger still that no two leaves of a tree, or blades of grass, are alike either. And while in a sense we are always doing something for others, 'tis ourselves we do be thinking about most of the time."

"True, very true! And as they say across the water: 'Every man for himself, and the dollar for us all.' Or as the Devil said when he joined the police force: 'There's no one like our own,'" said Micus.

"Life is full of surprises, and the world is full

of strange people," said Padna. "And 'tis a good job that we are like the leaves of the trees, and the blades of grass, so alike and yet so different. If we all had the same tastes, we might have no taste at all, so to speak."

"Speaking of strange people," said Micus, "I wonder if you ever heard tell of one Malachi Riordan who used to sit in his back yard, every fine night, watching the reflection of the moon in a bucket of water, hoping to find the evening star with the aid of his wife's spectacles."

"I did not then," said Padna. "But I met just as strange a man, and he sitting on his hat on the banks of the Fairy Lake of Lisnavarna, watching the moon's reflection in the clear waters, and the devil a one of him knew that he was contrary at all."

"Sure if a man was contrary, he wouldn't know it, and if he was told he was contrary, he wouldn't believe it, but think that every one was contrary but himself," said Micus. "And I believe the Lake at Lisnavarna has a fatal fascination for people who are as sensible as ourselves.

'Twas there that Matty Morrissey, the great fiddler of Arnaliska, and the holy Bishop of Clonmorna met their doom."

"How?" said Padna.

"They were driving in an open carriage along the lonely roads at the dead of night," said Micus, "and no finer carriage was ever seen, with its two wheels behind and its two wheels before, and a special seat for the driver, and cushions fit for a duke to sit on, and the Arms of the Four Provinces painted on the doors, and —"

"Where were they driving to?" said Padna.

"They were driving at breakneck speed to the little thatched chapel on the Hill of Meath, with its marble altar, red-tiled floor, painted Stations of the Cross, and beautiful silver candlesticks, for the Bishop was in the devil of a hurry to marry Queen Maeve to the Crown Prince of Spain, and Matty Morrissey was to play the music for the dancers after the wedding. But, lo and behold! as the carriage rattled along the dark, winding roads, the holy Bishop, Matty, and the driver fell fast asleep, and the horse fell asleep also,

but he was a somnambulist and kept galloping away the same as if he was wide-awake, and when he came to the lake, he plunged into its silent waters, carrying with him the occupants of the carriage, and they all sank to its icy depths the same as if they were made of lead, and they were never heard of from that fatal hour to this blessed day."

"And why didn't some one try to recover their bodies and give them a public funeral and christian burial?" said Padna.

"What would be the use? Sure there is no bottom at all to the Lake of Lisnavarna. And you might as well be looking for a Christmas box from the Devil himself as to be looking for any one who gets drowned there," said Micus.

"That's a sad story," said Padna. "But 'tis better to be drowned inself than roasted to death in a forest fire, or worse still, talked to death by your mother-in-law or some of your friends."

"Talk is a deadly instrument of torture," said Micus.

"'Tis indeed," said Padna, "and sometimes

as bad as silence, but tell me how the disaster affected Queen Maeve and the Crown Prince."

"Poor Queen Maeve wept so much that she lost her beauty, and the Crown Prince married a farmer's daughter who had a dowry of three stockingsful of sovereigns, thirty-three acres of loamy soil, three cows, and three clucking hens," said Micus.

"'Tis a sad world for some," said Padna. "And 'tis my belief that the best as well as the worst of us don't give a traneen about women once they lose their beauty."

"That's my belief also," said Micus. "Yet only for women there would be no love, and love is the greatest thing in all the world. It is an echo of Heaven's glory, so to speak, and when denied us we don't live at all. Without love we are nothing more nor less than dead men, stalking about from place to place, clutching on to this thing and that thing with the hope that we will be compensated for what we have missed. For what, might I ask, is a dog or a cat or a heap of money itself to a man or woman, when the dark

nights come and the frost and snow does be on the ground, and the wind blows down the chimney? And even though we might have plenty faggots for the fire and plenty food in the cupboard, and more than we want for ourselves, what good is it all, unless we have some one to share it with us? 'Tis by sharing with others that we bring ourselves nearer to God. And He has given the earth and all it contains to the good and bad alike!"

"And 'tis by sharing with ourselves and being decent to ourselves on all occasions that we acquire wisdom," said Padna.

"Be that as it may, now let me hear about the stranger you met at the Fairy Lake," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "as I approached him I up and ses: 'Good night, stranger,' ses I.

"'Good night kindly,' ses he.

"'Tis a fine night, thank God,' ses I.

"'Tis a glorious night,' ses he. 'But why do you come here to interrupt me, and I enjoying myself without any expense to you?'

"'Oh,' ses I, 'if you didn't interrupt some

people they would never cease doing foolish things, and if you didn't interrupt others they would never make any progress. And if we never asked questions we might be as ignorant as the schoolmasters themselves. 'Tis only by studying others that we can find out how wise or foolish we are ourselves.'

"'That may be, but curiosity is the cause of all trouble,' ses he.

"'Curiosity is a sign of intelligence,' ses I. 'Because only for it we mightn't try and find out what others were doing, and they might steal a march on ourselves, so to speak, by taking advantage of our indifference.'

"'Howsomever,' ses he, 'what is it to you what I am doing? If we were only half as interested in our own affairs, as we are in those of others, 'twould be a good job for us all. Then we might achieve some success, but while we will keep bothering ourselves about others and keep bothering others about ourselves, we can't expect either ourselves or any one else to be happy,' ses he.

"'Well, bedad,' ses I, 'there's something, if not a good deal, in what you say; still and all, if we weren't a source of annoyance to our neighbours, and if our neighbours weren't a source of annoyance to us, we might all die of inanition, and the whole globe might become nothing more or less than a beautiful garden, for the wild animals of the jungle, the birds of the air, and varmints like rats, mice, and cockroaches,' ses I.

"'Why, my good sir,' ses he, 'if you could have all your questions answered, you would become too wise, and then you would get so disgusted with yourself and every one else that you might take it into your head to jump from the top of some high cliff into a raging sea and end your life in that way.'

"'If I was going to commit suicide, at all,' ses I, ''tis the way I'd pay some one to put poison in my ear while I would be asleep, and die like the King of Denmark himself.'

"'Your conceit is refreshing! Not alone would you have your name in the paper for being a suicide, but for aiding and abetting in your own

murder as well. 'Twould be a clear case of dying by another's hand at your own instigation. But now to your query. You asked me what I was looking at in the lake.'

"'I believe I did,' ses I.

"'Well,' ses he, 'I was looking at the lady in the moon.'

"'The lady in the moon!' ses I.

"'Yes,' ses he, 'the lady in the moon.'

"'Sure, I always thought there was only a man in the moon,' ses I.

"'There's a lady there too, but don't tell any one,' ses he.

"'Are you afraid any one might run away with her?' ses I.

"'Well, I am and I am not,' ses he.

"'When did you discover that there was a lady in the moon?' ses I.

"'Years and years ago when I was a young man of three sixes,' ses he.

"'The Lord save us all!' ses I. 'And you never told the scientists about it?'

"'I did not,' ses he. 'They should have found

it out for themselves. There's many a thing that the scientists don't know, and many a thing that the clergy don't know, and many a thing that the very wisest of us don't know, but there is one thing that we all know,' ses he.

"'And what is that?' ses I.

"'Some day we will all be as dead as decency. But nevertheless it doesn't make us treat each other a bit better,' ses he.

"'The uncertainty of everything is the only certainty we have,' ses I. 'And very few of us say anything worth thinking about, and what most of us think is not worth talking about. However, I'd like to know whether the moon was in the east or the west when you discovered the lady that captured your heart.'

"''Twas in this very lake the moon was when I saw my love for the first time, and though some fifty years or more have passed since then, she is as beautiful, lithe, lissome, and gay as ever, and she as elegant as Helen of Troy herself,' ses he.

"'I've been looking at the moon all my life-time,' ses I, 'in pools of water, lakes, rivers, and

the sky itself, and the devil a one I ever saw in it at all.'

"'That's not a bit surprising,' ses he. 'Some walk from the cradle to the grave without noticing the beauty of the universe, and what's more, they are never impressed with what's extraordinary, or surprised at the obvious. And when they see the things they have heard so much about, they do be surprised at what they think is the stupidity of the intelligent people, because they have no sense of the beautiful themselves.'

"'God knows,' ses I, 'there are women enough on the face of the earth without going to look for them in the moon, nevertheless, I'd like to see the lady that's as purty as Helen of Troy, and she more beautiful than all the queens of the world.'

"'Well,' ses he, 'if you want to see the lady of the moon, you must take a hop, step, and a jump forward, and a hop, step, and a jump, backward, then turn on your heel three times, bore a hole in the crown of your hat with the buckhorn handle of your blackthorn, put your face in the hat itself, look through the hole the way you'd look at

the stars through a telescope, and you'll see the lady I fell head and heels in love with when I was a lad of three sixes.'

"'Bedad,' ses I, 'that would be a queer thing for me to do. Sure while I'd have my face in the hat, you might run behind me and give me one kick and pitch me headlong into the lake, and I'd be sinking in its icy waters for ever like Matty Morrissey the fiddler, and the holy Bishop of Clonmorna.'

"'God forgive you for having such an evil mind,' ses he. 'I that never did hurt nor harm to any one in all my born days, but myself.'

"'Well,' ses I, 'a man always makes a fool of himself about women, and he might as well make a fool of himself one way as another, and as I won't be making a precedent by doing something idiotic to please another, I'll bore a hole in my hat, though I'd rather bore one in yours, and try if I can't see the lady.' And as true as I'm telling you, I looked through the hole and saw the lady of the moon for the first time, and then I up and ses to the stranger: '

"'What kind of a man are you to remain a bachelor all those long years, and to be coming here night after night, when the moon shows in the sky, wasting your affection on a lady you never opened your lips to?' ses I.

"'I'm the happiest man alive,' ses he. 'Because the woman I love has never wounded or slighted me in any way, and what's more, she never will. She don't want to be going out to balls and parties at night, and gallivanting with other women's husbands, and she cares as little about the latest fashions as I do myself. And we have never had as much as a single quarrel, and we are the same to each other now as when first we met. I have yet to be disillusioned,' ses he, 'and that's something worth boasting about.'

"'But,' ses I, 'for all you know, the lady of the moon might be in love with the man in the moon.'

"'That's so,' ses he. 'And maybe your wife might be in love with the man next door, or across the street, or some one away in the wilds

of Africa, Australia, or America, or she may be in love with some one who's dead and gone, or some good-looking stranger who came into her life for a day or a week and went out of it for ever. Women can keep their own secrets,' ses he. 'They don't tell us all they think, and very often when they say no, they mean yes. You have a lot to learn,' ses he.

"'Maybe I have,' ses I. 'But 'tis as bad for a man to know too much or too little, as to know nothing at all, I'm thinking.'

"'Maybe it is,' ses he.

"'And when are you going to wed the lady in the moon? Is it when she comes down from the sky?' ses I.

"'No,' ses he, 'but when she comes up from the lake.' And then a large dark cloud floated past and the lady of the moon was seen no more that night."

"'Tis about time we went indoors," said Padna.

"'Tis," said Micus. "The Angelus is ringing, and I'm feeling hungry."

A Bargain of Bargains

A BLUE haze hung on the distant hills when Padna Dan looked pensively from the landscape to his watch, and said to his friend Micus Pat, who stood by his side: "The world is surely a wonderful and a beautiful place as well; but it would seem as though there were wings on the feet of time, so quickly does night follow day."

"Time is the barque that carries us from the cradle to the grave, and leaves us on the shores of the other world alone," said Padna. "And as my poor mother used to say:

Time, like youth, will have its fling,
And of a beggar make a king;
And of a king a beggar make,
Merely for a joke's sake.

Time indeed brings many changes. Cromwell made peasants of the Irish gentry, and America made gentry of the Irish peasantry, and awful snobs some of them became too! But a whit for snobbery, for what is it but an adjunct of prosperity, like gout, which disappears again with adversity."

"Snobbery at best is a foolish thing," said Micus.

"But when we consider the unimportance of our own troubles, and the importance of the principal parts of the British Empire, such as Ireland, England, Scotland, Australia and T. P. O'Connor, our insignificance looms up before our gaze, and almost strikes us in the face, so to speak."

"And 'tis surprising it doesn't obliterate us altogether," said Padna. "However, let us forget Tay Pay O'Connor for a little while, as he will never do so himself, and I will tell you a story about one Cormac McShane from the townland of Ballinderry."

"On with the story; I am always glad to hear tell of some one worth talking about," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "Cormac was as fine a looking man as ever broke his promises. And unless you had great astuteness of observation, and an eye like a hawk or a landlady, you wouldn't see the likes of him in a twelvemonth, even though you might be gallivanting through the streets every day. And while nature treated him rather well, for the poor man he was, Dame Fortune seemed to have ignored him altogether, until he took his fate in his own hands, and then things began to improve. But to make a short story as long as I can, like the journalists and modern novelists, one day while Cormac was sitting in a barber's chair, having his hair cut and trying to forget what the barber was talking about, a bright idea came to him as he caught a glimpse of himself in the looking-glass, and lo and behold! without saying a word, he jumped up and stood on his two feet, and the poor barber got so excited that he cut a piece off the top of his right ear. Cormac wasn't the least displeased, because he always thought that his ears were too long, so then and there he told the barber to cut a piece about the

same length off his other ear, so that they would both look nice and even. And when his wishes were complied with, he thanked the barber, and then he up and ses to himself: 'Cormac McShane,' ses he, 'I never before thought you were such a good-looking fellow. Sure the King of Spain or the Emperor of China would feel as proud as a peacock to have a countenance like yours. Yet,' ses he, 'isn't it a strange thing that one so handsome, and modest likewise, and with such a splendid appetite, and a taste for good things in general, should be compelled by stress of circumstances to live on pigs' heads, and tough cabbage, and no change at all in your dietary but salt conger eels on Fridays. Why,' ses he, 'a man with your appreciation should have plenty of the choice things of life, and never know the want of anything. What, might I ask,' ses he, 'has the world achieved by all the books that have been written, and all the charity sermons that have been preached, when you, Cormac McShane, couldn't go from Cork to Dublin unless you borrowed the money, and it might be as hard for you to

borrow it, as 'twould be for yourself to lend it to another.'

"That's good sound talk," said Micus. "Go on with the story, and don't let any one interrupt you."

"'Now,' ses Cormac, 'If every one in the whole world from Peru to Clonakilty would only give you a halfpenny each, and no one would miss such a trifle, you would be the richest man alive, and then you needn't give a traneen about any one. But, of course,' ses he, 'that would be too much originality to expect from the bewildered inhabitants of the globe, moreover,' ses he, 'when we consider that the majority of people are always trying to get something for nothing, themselves."

"He had the temperament of a millionaire," said Micus.

"Indeed, he had, and the ingenuity of the tinkers, who would charge for putting a patch on a skillet where there was no hole at all," said Padna. "'However,' ses Cormac to himself, 'there's nothing like money, no matter how it may have been earned, and every man should be his

own counsellor, because the little we know about each other only leads us into confusion and chaos. Now,' ses he, 'very few ever became wealthy by hard work alone, and you, Cormac McShane, must think of some scheme by which you can become rich, and all of a sudden too.' And so he exercised his brains for about a month, and kept thinking and thinking, until finally he managed to capture an idea that he found straying among all the wild fancies that ever kept buzzing about in his head. And he was so pleased and delighted that he ses to himself: 'Cormac,' ses he, 'there isn't another man alive who could think of such a short cut to wealth, health, and happiness, and as a mark of my appreciation, I will now treat you to whatever you may want, provided, of course, that it won't cost more than one shilling. A shilling is enough to spend on any one at a time, unless you are sure of getting two shillings, worth in return. And extravagance is nearly as bad as economy, when it isn't used to advantage.'"

"And what was the brilliant idea that inspired

such generosity?" said Micus. "Was it the way he made up his mind to dress himself as a duke, and go to America and marry some heiress who couldn't tell a duke from a professional plausible humbug?"

"It wasn't anything as commonplace as that," said Padna.

"What was it then?" said Micus.

"'I'm going to raffle myself at a guinea a ticket,' ses he. 'And if I will sell five hundred, I will have enough to buy a small farm. That would give me a real start in life, and after I have what I want, discontent is possible.' And then and there, he got his photo printed on a card, on which was written:

'A Bargain of Bargains

To be raffled, and drawn for, on St. Swithin's eve, at the Black Cock Tavern, one Cormac McShane. He stands five feet six inches in his stocking vamps, black hair, blue eyes, an easy disposition, and no poor relations. A limited number

of tickets, to wit, five hundred, will be sold at one guinea each, to widows without children, of less than three score and five.'"

"Well," said Micus, "the devil be in it, but that was the most extraordinary way I ever heard of a man looking for a wife with a fortune. And why did he make the stipulation that only widows were eligible?"

"Because widows are always less extravagant than single women, and they know how to humour a man better, when he has lost his temper."

"And how many tickets did he sell?" asked Micus.

"Every single one, and he could have sold as many more, only he hadn't them printed," said Padna.

"And that was how Cormac McShane got a wife, or how a wife got him, if you will?" said Micus.

"Yes," said Padna, "and while the money lasted, Cormac was the happiest man in the country."

"Now," said Micus, "if Cormac McShane was a wise man, Garret Doran was another."

"How so?" said Padna. "Was it the way he always kept his mouth shut until he had something to say?"

"Not exactly," said Micus. "But he could do that too, when it pleased him. Garret was a miller, who kept a mill near the courthouse, so one day when the famous judge, Patcheen the Piper, as he was called, was sitting on the Bench, passing sentence on a batch of patriots who were to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for no other offence than loving a country that never did anything for them better than they loved themselves, a great noise was heard, and the Judge was so annoyed at being disturbed that he stopped short in the middle of the death sentence and ses, at the top of his voice:

"'What hullaballoo is that I hear? And who dares make any noise at all, and interfere with my amusement?' ses he. 'If I will hear another sound, I'll order every one within a radius of five miles to be boiled in turpentine, and sealed

up in tin cans, and have them shipped to the King of the Cannibal Islands, as a Christmas box from the people of generous Ireland,' ses he.

"'Oh,' ses the Crown Solicitor, 'that's only Garret Doran's mill grinding corn for the poor people.'

"'The poor people!' ses the Judge in a rage. 'Who the devil cares a traneen about the poor but the politicians when they want to get their votes, the kings and emperors when they want them to go to the wars, or the clergy when they are preaching charity sermons for the benefit of the inhabitants of Central Africa? And who will deny that those cannibals wouldn't be better off if they were left alone? Nevertheless, 'tis only fair to state that they have just as much appreciation of decency and kindness as the best of ourselves. But be all that as it may, go and tell Garret Doran to stop his mill at once, and if he don't obey your orders, bring him here before me, and I'll order him to be hanged with these poor fools of patriots who have done less to annoy me than he has. And hanging patriots, if you

haven't a conscience, is as good a way of making a living, as starving your employees to death, like some of the pious-faced rascals who have the impudence to invite myself to dine with them. Not indeed, that the likes of me wants a dinner or a meal of food from any one. The poor, who can't afford a square meal more than once in the year, are never invited to partake of the hospitality of those who give dinners to those who don't need them. But why should I bother about anything in a world like this, where everything is in such a hopeless state of confusion? Howsomever, a judge, like a lawyer, has to live down to the dignity of his profession, and unless he hangs a man now and again, the Government might think he had no interest in his job at all.

"'Of course,' ses he, 'when we think of the number of useless and troublesome people in the world and the few who find their way to the gallows, we should not worry about them, unless they might happen to be some relation of our own. The only time we really take an interest in other people's troubles is when such troubles

affect ourselves. Nevertheless,' ses he, 'this is a rather lengthy digression, so be off with yourself at once to Garret Doran, and tell him his mill must be stopped this very instant.'

"Well, the Crown Solicitor went to Garret and told him what the Judge had said, and Garret ordered the mill to be stopped, and the Judge received no further trouble from Garret or his mill while the trial lasted. And when the Assizes were over, the Judge went away, and he didn't return again for five years. But when he was sitting on the Bench again for himself, passing sentence of death on more patriots, who should walk up to him but Garret himself, and he dressed in his Sunday clothes? And without as much as saying: 'Good-morrow, how are you,' or 'Go to the devil inself,' he up and hands him a large sealed envelope. And when Patcheen the Piper opened and read the note it contained, his face turned scarlet, and he jumped up from his throne of plush and gold trimmings, and ses: 'What the blue blazes is the meaning of all this?' ses he.

"'Don't get excited, whatever you'll do,' ses

Garret. ''Tis nothing more nor less than a bill for the expenses incurred by closing down my mill at your instigation some five years ago.'

"For a while the Judge said nothing at all, but kept looking hard at Garret, and then all of a sudden ses he: 'Why, in the name of all the descendants of Julius Cæsar and Brian Boru in America, didn't you start the mill going after I left the city?'

"'You never told me to do so,' ses Garret. 'And if I did start it without your permission, I might have been sent to gaol for five hundred years or more.'

"'Well,' ses the Judge, 'I'm sorry I can't send you to a warmer place than gaol to punish you for fooling me in such a successful manner. Why, man alive,' ses he, 'your conduct is preposterous; in fact, 'tis worse, because 'tis ridiculous as well.'

"''Tis the incongruity of things that makes a living for most of us,' ses Garret. 'And only a fool would get angry about anything. Anyway,' ses he, 'I don't care a traneen what happens to you, so long as I will get what is coming to me.'

"'Bedad,' ses the Judge, 'in spite of all our old talk, that seems to be the beginning and end of human ambition. We all like to get as much as we can for nothing, and give as little as possible in return.'

"But to finish my story, the case was taken from the high courts to the low courts, and from the low courts back again to the high courts, and between the jigs and the reels, so to speak, Garret got his money, and Patcheen the Piper never asked any one to stop a mill again."

"That's the devil's own queer yarn," said Padna. "If we all had to wait until we were told what to do, we wouldn't do anything at all."

"We wouldn't," agreed Micus.

Shauno and the Shah

"WELL," said Padna to his friend Micus, as they sat on a donkey cart on their way to market, "I wonder if you ever heard tell of Shauno the Rover."

"Wisha, indeed I did not then. Who was he at all?" asked Micus.

"He was a distant relation of my own who lived in the good old days when women stayed at home and looked after the children and the household," said Padna. "And he was as contrary a creature as ever mistook ignorance for knowledge, and like all of his kind he was as happy as the days are long when he was giving trouble to some one else. But, bad luck to him and to all like him, he was the most dissatisfied man that was ever allowed to have all his own way, and 'tis said he could swear in seven languages, and swear all day without getting tired.

"However, though he was queer and contrary, he was a gentleman withal. And he was never known to use his rare vocabulary in the presence of ladies, but would wait until their backs were turned, like a well-trained married man, and then curse and damn them one and all to perdition."

"And was it the way he disliked women?" said Micus.

"Not exactly, but because he couldn't find any particular one that he could like better than another. And that was why he made up his mind to leave the country altogether, and go to foreign parts to look for a wife who might be different from any he might find at home," said Padna.

"Bedad," said Micus, "Shauno must have been a genius or else a fool, and at times it takes a wise man to know one from the other."

"Whatever he was, or whatever he wasn't, one thing is certain, and that is, he was an excellent actor both on and off the stage, and could play the part of poet or peasant, king or beggar, with equal grace and naturalness. And so it

was one day, when he got heartily sick of all the tame nonentities he had to deal with, he up and ses to himself: 'Shauno,' ses he, 'there are enough of mollycoddles and pious humbugs in the world without adding to their number, and unless you will do something original now while you are young and foolish, you are not likely to do anything but what some one else tells you to do when you are old.'

"And without saying another word, he went straight home, dressed himself up as Henry the Eighth, and after paying a visit to the mayor of the town, went on board a warship that was lying in the harbour beyond. And when the poor captain saw Shauno attired like a mighty monarch, he got the fright of his life, and never said a word at all until Shauno up and ses: ''Tis a fine day, Captain,' ses he.

"'I know that myself, already,' ses the Captain, 'but who in the name of all the corncrakes in Munster are you, and what brings you here, and what can I do for you besides flinging you overboard to the sharks and the sea gulls?'

"'Oh,' ses Shauno, 'don't be so eager to do something you may be sorry for. All that I want you to do is to land me in Sperrispazuka within five days, and if you will accomplish the feat, I will raise your wages and promote you to the rank of admiral.'

"'And who the blazes are you to come here without being invited and give an order like that to myself?' ses the Captain.

"'Who the devil do you think I could be, or want to be, you impudent varmint, but Henry the Eighth?' ses he. 'By all the people I have made miserable, I'll have you lashed to the mouth of a cannon, and blown to smithereens if you don't do what you are told. How dare you insult the King of England and Scotland, not to mention Ireland and Australia?' ses he.

"Then the bold Captain ses: 'I beg your Majesty's pardon,' ses he. 'I thought you were some play actor or other who had lost his wits. So I hope you will accept my apology for the mistake I have so unfortunately made, and my stupidity likewise.'

"'Tis hard for me ever to forgive or overlook stupidity because, like all religious people, I can't stand in another the faults I have in a large measure myself. But considering that you have been a faithful servant to the family for a number of years, I will let you off with a caution this time. But be sure and never make mistakes again, unless you know what you are doing,' ses Shauno.

"'Thank you for your kind advice,' ses the Captain. 'Is there anything I can do now to please or oblige your Majesty?'

"'There is,' ses Shauno. 'Hold your tongue, put full steam ahead, and tell the sailors not to say their prayers aloud, because I am going to bed this very instant, and don't want to be disturbed. But call me in the morning at eight o'clock sharp,' ses Shauno. 'And be sure and have my breakfast ready on time. I will have a busy day to-morrow. I must shave and read the newspaper.'

"'What will you have for breakfast?' ses the Captain.

"'One fathom and half of drisheen, six fresh eggs, three loaves of bread, goat's ears, ostrich brains, and two heads of cabbage. And I'd like a toothful of something to help me to digest the little repast,' ses Shauno.

"'I suppose a keg or two of rum, or a dozen of stout, will do,' ses the Captain.

"'As there's luck in odd numbers, you had better make it three dozen of stout,' ses Shauno. 'And if I feel like any more, I'll let you know.'

"Well, the old fool of a captain really thought he was Henry the Eighth, and he did everything that Shauno told him, until they reached Sperrispazuka.

"And when the mosques and the turrets of the city hove in sight and the ship once more lay at anchor, Shauno trod the deck with pride and ses to the Captain: 'Captain,' ses he, 'allow me to compliment you on this marvellous achievement. I never before made the journey in such a short space of time, and in honour of the event I will make you a present of two-and-sixpence and

make you a Knight of Columbus besides. But before I will take my leave of yourself and the ship, I want a royal salute of twenty-one guns to be fired and burst every pane of glass in the town beyond with the noise. A shout is better than a whisper if you want to be heard, and we all get more by asking for what we want than by remaining silent.'

"'Anyhow,' ses he, 'half the world is living on its wits, or by bluff, if you will, and the other half enjoys itself, so to speak, at the expense of inequality, non-fraternity, and suppression of the people's rights. Yet for all that, most of the well-fed and superfine humbugs we meet every day seem to be as happy and contented as if they deserved to be. And all you have got to do to convince yourself that the wisdom of man has not interfered with the extravagance of women is to look at the way they dress, or look at your bank book at the end of the year if you are married. But be all that as it may, I think that I have said enough, for talk is always cheap, and 'tis doubtful if anything that's cheap

or given away for nothing is ever appreciated by the discerning or the undiscerning.'

"'And now,' ses he, 'as I have but a few more words to say, I would advise you, one and all, to be decent to each other while you can, because a time will come when you can't. And 'tis better to do a foolish thing now than to be sorry for not doing it later. On the other hand, 'tis a wise policy to refuse anything you may be offered for nothing, because a compliment bestowed is always like a millstone around a man's neck. Independence, of course, is a fine thing, but it is always purchased at too high a price. And a state of independence is only acquired by either cheating yourself or some one else.

"'But nevertheless,' ses he, 'the man who always thinks of himself first is the last to be neglected. And the man who don't hold his tongue when he has nothing to say is nearly sure to make a fool of himself. Howsomever, the time is now come for me to make my departure. So let loose the guns,' ses he, 'and fire the Royal Salute.'

"And lo and behold! the Captain obeyed his orders, and such noise was never before heard in the harbour of Sperrispazuka. And when silence was resumed Shauno whispered to the Captain and ses: 'I'm going to sojourn here for a month or two, and I'll send a telegram to you to call for me when I am ready to return.' So with that they shook hands and parted.

"And when the ship sailed away, Shauno went ashore and walked around the town until he found a menagerie. Then he hired a complement of one hundred elephants, and numerous pages and attendants, flags, banners, caravans, and the devil knows what."

"And what did he want the elephants for?" said Micus.

"He was going to visit the Shah," said Padna, "and he wanted to make a good impression. And when all the elephants were placed one after another in a line, he took the place of honour himself on the back of the first and largest of the great brutes. And as the procession passed on its way through the town to the Shah's country

home, the House of Ten Thousand Windows, everybody — men, women, and children alike — stopped in the streets and took off their hats, thinking that Shauno was the King of England, and he was beginning to think so too, or at least that he was as great an old bla'guard as Henry himself. But when he arrived at the castle gates and found the Shah sitting on his tombstone feeding the pigeons, he was sorely disappointed, because he expected a royal escort to meet him outside the courtyard.

"The Shah was kind of startled when he saw Shauno and his staff, and nearly lost his temper and ses: 'Who in the name of the few decent people that a man meets in the course of a lifetime, are you? And who the devil owns these Irish terriers?' ses he, as he pointed to the elephants.

"'Wisha, bad luck and a dozen daughters to you,' ses Shauno, 'what do the likes of you mean by offering insults to a distinguished foreigner like myself? If you read the newspapers as you should, you would know that I was Henry the

Eighth, and that these quadrupeds are neither Irish terriers nor mosquitoes, but elephants.'

"'Is that so?' ses the Shah. 'Wait till I will put on my glasses. My sight is somewhat impaired from reading the names of all my wives and their pedigrees.' And then he put on his glasses and ses: 'Bedad, sure enough, they are not Irish terriers at all, but real live elephants. And 'tis yourself is no one else but Henry the Eighth. I hope to be excused and forgiven for my mistake.'

"'I'll forgive you this time,' ses Shauno.

"'Very well,' ses the Shah, 'you might as well come inside and sit down if you are in no hurry, and we will see if we can't enjoy ourselves, and I will get my servants to look after the terriers, I mean the elephants, while we'll make merry.'

"'The devil a hurry, or a flurry, am I in,' ses Shauno. And with that they adjourned to the Shah's drawing-room, and when they were comfortably seated in two armchairs, the Shah rang for a servant to fetch the decanter and a pack of cards. And when the cards were placed on

the table, the Shah grabbed them up and ses to Shauno: 'What is it going to be? A game of Forty-Five, or what? There's nothing like a game of cards to pass a dull hour among dull people.'

"'Forty-Five, of course,' ses Shauno, as he poured out a glass of whiskey for himself and another for the Shah.

"'Right you are,' ses the Shah. 'There's nothing to beat a game of Forty-Five, except a good game of bowls on a hard straight road on a winter's day. Howsomever, I won't give you a demonstration on the art of bowl-playing now, but I will show you how to deal the cards in the true Carrigaline fashion, as introduced by the King of Spain while he was here on a visit many years ago.'

"'Bedad,' ses Shauno, 'I think the Clonakilty, or the Skibbereen deal is just as good, but as they are all the same, we won't allow the matter be a subject for discussion.'

"The cards were duly dealt, and the Shah ses to Shauno: 'What will we play for at all?' ses he.

"'Small stakes for a start, of course,' ses Shauno. 'I'll back every ship in my navy against every ship in yours, if you don't mind.'

"'Done,' ses the Shah, as he placed the decanter on his head and finished the whiskey. Then they took off their coats, and after an exciting game the Shah won. Shauno was very much surprised and disappointed, and said as he pointed to the decanter to have it filled again: 'Damn the bit of luck have I had since I met a red-headed widow two months ago first thing on a Monday morning, and I'm afraid I will never have any luck again.'

"'I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you. We will be all dead one day, and then we won't know whether we were lucky or not,' ses the Shah.

"'That's cold comfort, as the cat said after she jumped into the freezing water when chased by a mad dog. I have ruined my country by my extravagance. She is no longer Mistress of the Seas, and though that may be a consolation to Germany, it will lose for me a good deal of prestige. Howsomever, I am not dead broke yet, and even if a man is dead broke inself, there is

no reason why he should go whining about it. A good gambler never cares whose money he spends or how much he loses. I will now,' ses he 'back Ireland against what I have lost and keep up the custom of my country by treating the Irish with contempt and injustice. So let us play again.'

"'Good,' ses the Shah. 'We'll play again.'

"'I'll give them the tinker's deal for luck this time,' ses Shauno.

"'As you please,' ses the Shah. ''Tis all the same to me, so long as I win. A good gambler never cares how much he takes from his friends, or how many people he makes miserable.'

"This time they played a great game, but Shauno lost again, and it made him more angry than ever.

"'Now,' ses he, 'that I have lost Ireland, it doesn't matter what happens to the rest of my territory. We'll play one game of Twenty-Five, and I'll back my boots, my meerschaum pipe, five ounces of tobacco, and Australia against Ireland and my fleet.'

"'Don't you think you are getting reckless?' ses the Shah.

"'I may be,' ses Shauno. 'But I might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. And one poor man more or less won't make much difference. On with the game. Philosophy is only a comfort to a man when he isn't in a state of desperation.'

"'As you will,' ses the Shah. 'Anything at all to please you.'

"So the cards were dealt once more and they played a game of Twenty-Five, and the Shah scored.

"Shauno lost his temper and commenced to swear and break up the furniture, but the Shah only looked on and smiled. Then Shauno flung a chair at him, and ses: 'You bleddy foreign rascal, sure 'tis myself that's the fool for having anything to do with the likes of you. I'll never be able to face home now, after all the misfortune I have had.'

"'Oh,' ses the Shah, 'I wouldn't behave like that if I were you. 'Tis undignified to appear

natural in the presence of strangers. We should always reserve ingratitude and bad treatment for our friends. You are a little upset, of course, for losing what didn't belong to you, but you will feel all right again as soon as you will begin to acquire what you don't deserve.'

"'If I had my own way, —' ses Shauno.

"'If we all had our own way, the little glimmer of democracy and decency that we see struggling for existence occasionally would disappear for ever,' ses the Shah. 'Howsomever, don't be downhearted, but take a good drop of poteen, and 'twill give you all the false courage that any man wants.'

"And then he produced a small keg of the best poteen, and they drank glass after glass, and sang all the songs they could remember, from 'The Croppy Boy' to the 'Bard of Armagh,' until they fell on the floor and had to be taken to bed.

"And there they slept for two days and three nights, and on the morning of the third day, Shauno woke up with a bursting headache, and

asked the Shah if he was still alive and in the land of the living. And the Shah was surprised that a real aristocrat should be so upset and affected by a night's innocent amusement. Well, they had breakfast together, and after the repast, the Shah took Shauno to see the sights, and when they arrived at the Royal Harem, Shauno fainted when he saw all the wives the poor Shah had to look after. It took him two weeks to count them all, and at the end of that time the Shah ses: 'Well,' ses he, 'how many would you like to take for a present? You can have all you want, because I am expecting another shipload next week as a Christmas box.'

"'Thanks for your kind offer,' ses Shauno. 'But I am cured now. I have made up my mind to go home and live in peace, and remain a bachelor for the remainder of my days.'

"'Oh,' ses the Shah, 'I think you should at least take one, and she will help to remind you of your visit to the Shah of Sperrispazuka.'

"'Tis only too well that I know that, but I have seen all I ever want to see of women,' ses

Shauno. 'But I'll tell you what you can do without offending me, or hurting my tender feeling in any way.'

"'What may that be?' ses the Shah.

"'You can loan me a million sovereigns to show there is no ill feeling between us, and send me home in one of your first-class battleships. Of course, I must travel as a private gentleman, and when I will arrive home, I will get my poet laureate to write an ode to your generosity.'

"'I'll loan you all you want,' ses the Shah.

"So there and then he took out his bank book and gave him a cheque for the full amount, and on the morrow Shauno sailed away for England in one of the swiftest ships that ever went to sea, and the Shah never heard of him from that day to this."

"That's the devil's own queer yarn," said Micus. "What did the Shah do when he found out that he had been fooled?"

"Oh, he was as cross as a bag of cats, of course, and retired to the banquet hall of his castle, sent for all his wives, and made this speech:

"'Ladies of all shapes and sizes,' ses he, 'I have good news for you this blessed day. I'm going to make widows of every one here present, and all those who couldn't gain admittance to this large and spacious hall as well.'

"And when they heard what he said, they all burst forth into uproarious applause, and began to fling chairs, benches, stools, ink-bottles, and hairpins at each other. In short, they created the devil of a hullaballoo entirely, and they might have set fire to the place, only he threatened to send for the police. Well, when silence and order was restored, he continued and ses:

"'Ladies,' ses he, 'you will be all glad to hear that I have been fooled and cheated by an impostor, and as I have proved conclusively to my own satisfaction that I am too foolish to live, I have made up my mind to die. Yes, ladies, and to die by my own hand too. But as many of you as possible must have something to remind you of married life and a devoted husband who is about to begin his troubles in the other world by ending his troubles in this. Now,' ses he, 'come

forward, one and all, and let each of you pluck a hair from my leonine head, and keep it in a locket as a souvenir until you will go home to the devil, or wherever else you may be destined for.'

"And as the last few words were spoken, he bent down his head, and his wives came along in single file to comply with his request, and before an hour was at an end, the Shah of Sperrispazuka was as bald as a snowball."

"And wouldn't it be easier for him to get a scissors and cut his hair and then distribute the locks, than to do anything so foolish," said Micus.

"Wisha, I suppose it would," said Padna. "But we all do foolish things when we are upset or excited. Well, when that part of the ceremony was all over, he ses, as the tears came to his eyes: 'Ladies,' ses he, 'I have no more to say. My hour is come and I am ready to die. I have here with me on this table a cocktail which is a concoction of ground green bottles, prussic acid, and black beetles mixed with some cheese that was refused by the soldiers at the fall of Rome, and if that won't send me to glory or perdition, may

I never again drown one of you in the Canal for losing your beauty. However,' ses he, 'as a last request I would ask you to control your emotion. Let there be no singing of the National Anthem, no dancing of jigs, drinking or carousing, breaking of windows or skulls, or any other patriotic manifestation of public grief, until I am cold in my grave.'

"And then he lifted the fatal glass to his lips and drained its contents to the dregs, and so passed away the Shah of Sperrispazuka."

"I feel like having a drink of something, myself," said Micus.

"So do I," said Padna. "I think we'll stop when we'll come to the Thrush and Magpie."

"As you please," said Micus.

The Mayor of Loughlaurna

I WONDER," said Padna to Micus, as they wended their way along a lonely road after Mass on a Sunday morning, "if you ever heard tell of the black dog of Dooniskey that was gifted with seven senses, second sight, and an easy disposition, who followed my grandfather from the Bridge of the Hundred Arches to the Half Way House in Cromwell's Glen on the night of the rising of '98. And how he caught a hold of the tail of his coat and dragged him from Owen Roe's Cross to Cuchulain's Boreen while the soldiers of England's king were scouring the highways looking for some one to hang to the nearest finger post. And 'twas little they cared about any man, for one man looked as good as another to them, as he swung from a branch of a

tree on the roadside or on a gibbet on the mountain top. And 'twas the selfsame black dog that saved him from the fairies of Galway on a dark windy night, when all the fairies of the world assembled in the Gap of Dunlow and made speeches in favour of women holding their tongues until the Judgment Day."

"I never heard tell of the black dog of Doonis-key, or your old grandfather, or the fairies who wanted to steal him either, but what the fairies wanted him for is more than I can understand," said Micus.

"Wisha, bad luck to your ignorance this blessed day, not to know that he was the best musician in the seven parishes, and the likes of his playing on the fiddle was never known since the Devil played a jig for Henry the Eighth the night he died. What do you think the fairies would want my grandfather for, but to play the 'Coulin,' 'Eileen Aroon,' 'The Last Rose of Summer,' 'The Dirge of Ossian,' 'The Lamentation of Deirdre' and 'My Dark Rosaleen' for them in the caves of the ocean when the drowsy eye of night

quivers and closes, and they tired of dancing to the music of the waves on the cobbled beaches of the north, south, east, and western coast?" said Padna.

"'Tis a great thing indeed to be able to play the fiddle, sing a song, dance a jig, make a short speech, tell a good story, or do anything at all that gives pleasure to another, but the greatest of all achievements is to be able to please yourself without offending some one else. But be that as it may, let me hear no more about your grandfather, because there is nothing disagrees with me more than to have to listen to some one retailing the exploits of people I haven't the remotest interest in," said Micus.

"Well, then, you might like to hear about the black cat I met the night before I got married," said Padna.

"What's coming over you at all? If we were to be noticing the doings of black cats, black dogs, the rats that leave a ship, the queer dreams that follow a heavy supper, the calm that precedes and follows a storm, and all the other signs and tokens

that may mean everything or nothing, we would become so bewildered that damn the bit of work would we do from one end of the year to the other, and by trying to become too wise we would become too foolish for sensible people to pay any attention to us," said Micus.

"Some men don't realize how foolish they are by being too sensible, until they see their grandchildren squandering their hard-earned savings," said Padna.

"That's the kind of experience that makes pessimists, and the few people worth working for are, as a rule, able to work for themselves. And though there is a limit to all things, except the extravagance of women and the patience of husbands, yet on the other hand only for women there would be no trouble, and without trouble of some kind life wouldn't be worth living," said Micus.

"There's trouble everywhere, both on the dry land, the stormy ocean, in the cot and in the castle, and the devil a one will you ever find who doesn't like to have a quarrel now and again.

But as the Mayor of Loughlaurna said to me one day: 'Life is too short for some, too long for others, and a great bother to us all,'" said Padna.

"Who the devil was the Mayor of Loughlaurna, and where did you meet him?" said Micus.

"The Mayor of Loughlaurna," said Padna, "if I am to take his own word for it, was a gentleman."

"A gentleman," said Micus, "don't have to tell you he's one."

"Neither does a bla'guard, a thief, or a rogue, for that matter," said Padna. "Howsomever, 'twas on a summer's day, many years ago when I was young, and believed all the things I should doubt, and doubted all I should believe, that I met the Mayor of Loughlaurna. I was out fishing in a small boat that I had moored in the centre of the lough itself, and though I started at early morning, blast the bit did I catch all day except a cold in the head and chest, but as I was about to haul in my line at the tail end of the evening, something began to pull and tug, and I hauled

and hauled and hauled until I thought I was dragging one of the Spanish Armada from the depths of the sea. But lo and behold! what did I find, when I came to the end of my pulling and tugging and dragging, but the finest-looking salmon your eyes ever rested on. And when I drew him over the gunwale, and took the hook from his mouth before breaking his neck on my knee, he gave one jump, cleared two thwarts, stood on his tail and commenced to abuse me, the same as if he was in politics all his lifetime."

"And what did he say?" said Micus.

"'Bad scran to your confounded impudence and presumption, not to say a word about your absence of courtesy and good breeding,' ses he. 'How dare you interfere with people who don't interfere with you?'

"'Oh,' ses I, 'sure 'tis by interference, inference, and ignorance that most of us become prosperous and presumptuous. And without presumption there would be no assumption, and without assumption there would be only chaos, and people

would never get the things they are not entitled to.'

"'Well,' ses he, 'I often heard that a little learning is the saving grace of an ignoramus, but now I have no doubt whatever about it.'

"'Well,' ses I, 'if it takes a rogue to find a rogue, it takes one ignoramus to find wisdom in another.'

"'I think,' ses he, 'that you have a lot to learn, and as much more to unlearn, before you will be fit to advise those who may be senseless enough to heed you.'

"'You should know,' ses I, 'unless you are a schoolmaster, that what is wisdom to one man is tomfoolery to another. But who the blazes are you anyway, that I should be wasting my time talking like this?'

"'You might as well be talking to me as anyone else,' ses he, 'because most people spend their lives between talking and sleeping, and all their old talk makes no more impression on the world than their snoring. And when they die, they are immediately forgotten by every one except those

to whom they owed money. But if 'tis the way you want to know who I am,' ses he, 'I will tell you before you will have time to make another mistake.'

"'You must hurry up then,' ses I.

"'The man who stands here before you,' ses he, 'is no less a person than His Lordship the Mayor of Loughlaurna.'

"'That's a giant of a title for a bit of a man like yourself,' ses I. 'But how came the likes of you to be Mayor of Loughlaurna?'

"'What way would any one become mayor of a city, unless by his ability to control others, or the ability of others to control him? Many a man got a good job because he knew how to hold his tongue,' ses he.

"'Bedad,' ses I, 'honesty must have gone on a holiday the day that gold was discovered, and never returned.'

"'Wisha, God help you for a poor fool to think that honesty ever existed. Honesty is like the gift of silence among women, — it only exists, so to speak, after death. But now to my history. I suppose you often heard tell of a song that the

tinkers sing in public houses on Saturday nights. It goes like this:

"On Lough Neagh's bank, as the fisherman strays,
When the clear cool eve's declining,
He sees the round towers of other days
In the waters beneath him shining."'

"'Indeed, I did then many and many a time,' ses I. 'My mother used to sing it for me when I was in the cradle, and 'twill keep ringing in my ears till the day I die, as 'twill keep ringing in the ears of every son of Granuaile, whether he be drinking tea with the dusky maidens of the South Seas or philandering with the beauties of the United States.'

"'Are the American beauties as contrary as ever?' ses he.

"'Well,' ses I, 'they can afford to be more so than women who can't support their husbands. Man at last is emancipated and is now beginning to take his place side by side with woman. The age of freedom is at hand and chaos is within arm's reach,' ses I.

"'That little digression was interesting,' ses he. 'But to proceed about the song. My poor mother used to sing it for me too, and told me the story of how it came to be written. It appears that in the long, long ago, before people were as satisfied with their ignorance and bad manners as they are to-day, there was a well in the town of Neagh that grew to be a great lake in the middle of the night, and before morning came the highest steeple was covered, and every single inhabitant, man, woman, and child, was drowned. And only for that,' ses he, 'maybe 'tis the way yourself would be walking through the streets of the town this very day admiring the pretty girls, for 'tis the eye of a philanderer you have, not to mention your sleuthering tongue.'

"''Twas long ago that I gave up admiring the pretty girls,' ses I.

"'I don't believe a word of it,' ses he. 'A man is never too old to admire a pretty woman. And the old men, God forgive them, are worse than the young men. For the young ones does be shy and bashful, while the old ones are as brazen and

courageous as the Devil himself, even though they might be on the brink of the grave itself.'

"'I have listened to enough of your old talk, and if you want me to believe that you are the Mayor of Loughlaurna, you must prove it. What are you but a fish? And how could a fish be Mayor of a city?'

"'I wasn't always a fish, and I suppose you have heard of Spain and the Rocky Mountains?' ses he.

"'I have, of course,' ses I.

"'And the children of Lir?' ses he.

"'Yes,' ses I.

"'Well, the night before King Lir's lovely daughter Fionnuala and her two brothers were turned into swans by the magic power of their stepmother, and condemned to wander on the waters of the world for three hundred years, I was sitting by my own fireside, reading about the adventures of Brian Boru, the Red Branch Knights, Queen Maeve, and Deirdre.'

"'Pardon me,' ses I, 'Brian Boru wasn't born when King Lir took unto himself a second wife.'

"'You shouldn't interrupt me for a trifle like

that, though strictly speaking trifles are the cause of most interruptions. That's only a historical mistake, and history itself is full of mistakes. And the man who can't make a mistake must be a damn fool. However,' ses he, 'as I was sitting by the hearth reading away for myself, who should stroll into the drawing-room but a fairy princess with a wand in her hand? And as I didn't know who she was or where she came from, I up and ses: "Good night, ma'am," ses I, "as you wouldn't say it yourself."'

"'Good night kindly,' ses she.

"'Might I ask who are you at all?' ses I.

"'If I told you who I am, you would be as wise as myself,' ses she.

"'Do you know who you are talking to?' ses he.

"'Indeed, I do,' ses she. 'You are Michael Henry Patrick Joseph Billy Dan MacMorrough, the Mayor of Laurna.'

"'That's my full name and title,' ses he, 'but I takes more after my mother's people than my father's.'

"'That's a pity, because your mother was decent to the point of folly, while your father never did a bit for any one but himself,' ses she.

"'And what may your business be with me this blessed night?' ses he.

"'I just want to amuse myself at your expense,' ses she.

"'And why at all?' ses he.

"'Well, just because you are the most respected man in the land, and have only a good word for every one, and because you have always done the right thing and lived an exemplary life. In this world most things go by contrary. The good must suffer so that the bad may have a chance of enjoying themselves. And as the good are always worrying about the bad, and as the bad never bother their heads about the good, and as everything is topsy turvy, 'tis only right and consistent that you should be duly punished for your virtues, and made to know what sorrow means in its widest sense,' ses she.

"'What are you going to do to me?' ses he.

"'I'm going to turn you into a fish,' ses she.

"'What kind of a fish? A sprat or a mackerel maybe?' ses he.

"'Nothing so common,' ses she.

"'What, then?' ses he.

"'A salmon,' ses she.

"'Thank heavens,' ses he. 'That same is a consolation.'

"'Things are never so bad that a woman can't make them worse. And things might be much better.'

"'Howsomever,' ses he, 'I think that 'tis a piece of gross injustice to change me from a respectable man into a fish, moreover when I am head and ears in love with King Lir's lovely daughter Fionnuala.'

"'Lir's lovely daughter was turned into a swan last night,' ses she. 'But 'tis better to have loved and lost inself than to be kept awake at night by squalling children who won't thank you when they grow up for all you had to endure on their account. And who would want to provide for a large wife and a large family unless he might have plenty money,' ses she.

"'Is it the truth you are telling about the children of Lir?' ses he.

"''Twill soon be a recorded fact in history,' ses she.

"And as the words fell from her lips, tears fell from his eyes, and he wept and wept until the water reached his chin, and then with one wave of the magic wand he was turned into a salmon, but he still continued to weep and weep until the waters rose above the highest steeple in the town of Laurna, and there he lived swimming about in his own tears, until I caught him when fishing for bream on a summer's evening some five and twenty years ago," said Padna.

"And what did you say to him when he told you that yarn?" said Micus.

"I said that I thought he should have been more upset about his own fate than that of Lir's lovely daughter.

"'That may be,' ses he, 'but there's no pleasure to be got from worrying about yourself. We only really enjoy ourselves when we fret and worry about those we love. The pleasures of melan-

choly are best enjoyed by those who have loved and lost and been desired by no one else. And besides,' ses he, 'the man who has suffered is always more interesting and entertaining than the man who has not. But at best that is only cold comfort.'

"'True for you,' ses I. 'Yet you should have received your liberty years and years ago, because the children of Lir were released from their captivity at the dawn of Christianity. The ringing of the first church bell was the signal for their release, but when they returned home after their wanderings, all their old friends and neighbours were dead and gone. Why you should be made suffer so much, or any of us, the best and the worst, is more than I can comprehend.'

"'The devil a one of me can understand it, either. None of us know what's before us, because none of us know what may have been behind us, so to speak. But if I did live before, 'tisn't likely that I was an angel,' ses he.

"'I suppose,' ses I, 'that none of us can differentiate thoroughly between good and evil. What

one man thinks is right another will think is wrong, and while none of us understand the other, we can't expect things to be any better than they are. If we all thought alike, there would be no difference of opinion. And if we all agreed about religion and politics, we might have the greatest contempt for each other. And unless a man is either better or worse than ourselves, we don't pay any attention to him at all.'

"'True,' ses he.

"'We could keep bladdering away like this till the leaves fall from the trees, but you have not told me yet when the fairy princess said you would be released,' ses I.

"'When a woman can be found who don't want to get her photo taken, or see herself in a mirror, or want to read her husband's letters, or search his pockets, and when the Germans will get to Paris,' ses he.

"'You had better go back to the Lough,' ses I.

"'I will,' ses he, 'because I am getting thirsty as well as homesick.'

"And with that he shook hands with me, bid

me good-by, and jumped into the waters, and that was the last I saw of the Mayor of Loughlaurna."

"There's no place like home," said Micus.

"No," said Padna.

The Land of Peace and Plenty

AH, God help us, but 'tis a bad night for poor sailors," said Padna Dan, as he pulled his chair close to the glowing hearth where faggots blazed and a kettle sang. "The strand will be strewn with wreckage to-morrow, and there will be more widows and lonely mothers in the world than ever there was before, and all because the winds have no mercy, and the sea has no mercy, and there's no mercy anywhere but in the heart of God. There's a peal of thunder now, and if the clouds burst and the rain comes, there won't be a sheaf of corn left standing in Castlebawn to-morrow."

"There will, please God," said Micus, as he stirred the fire.

"'Tis like you to have the good word," said

Padna, "but I'm sick and tired of this country altogether. When we have a fine summer we have a bad autumn, and when we have a good spring we have a wet summer, and when we have a hard winter we have nothing at all. I can't understand these things. 'Pon my word, I can't."

"No, nor any one else, either," said Micus. "How is it that decent fathers and mothers rear worthless children, and worthless children rear decent fathers and mothers? Or how is it that grass grows in the fields, and the lark sings in the sky, and the trees lose their leaves in winter? Or how is it that the world isn't under water long ago after all the rain we've had since Cromwell went to hell? Or how is it that people will spend half their lifetime educating themselves, and then go to war and kill people they had no quarrel with at all?"

"Didn't I tell you I can't understand these things?" said Padna, rather piqued. "Sure if I could, I'd be a philosopher, and if I was a philosopher, I wouldn't have to worry about anything."

"And why?" said Micus.

"Because philosophers are people with easy minds and usually they have all they want."

"And what's a pessimist?" said Micus.

"A pessimist is a philosopher before he gets a good job," answered Padna.

"And what am I then?"

"What are you? You're a philosopher, of course."

"Bedad, I suppose I am," said Micus. "It takes all kinds of people to make a world, anyway."

"It does," said Padna. "Philosophers, pessimists, suffragettes, and policemen."

"The world is a strange place."

"Indeed it is, and a beautiful place, when you haven't to work for a living."

"And life is a strange thing."

"Life is a wonderful thing, a queer and bewildering thing, but a magnificent thing withal, when you're not married."

"'Tis, but no one makes the most of it. Some make it short by trying to make it long, and others make it long by trying to make it short."

"Suicide is a cowardly thing if you're married, and a brave thing if you're not, but there's nothing worse than selfishness, except being an Orangeman. They're more proud than the peacocks themselves, and no one would bother with peacocks only for their fine feathers."

"I never ate peacocks," said Micus, "but I'd rather a good piece of bacon and cabbage than the finest turkey that was ever killed, cooked, and eaten."

"Good green cabbage is a wholesome thing and bacon is better, but when a man has neither, there's nothing like a good smoke."

"That's the worst of this country," said Micus. "Some things are better than others, and a little of anything only gives you an appetite for more, and too much is as bad as too little. Too little makes one peevish and selfish, and too much makes one foolish. When you're happy, you start thinking about the days of sorrow and mourning you had, and when you're unhappy you start thinking about the days of joy and pleasure, and no matter what way you are, you

want to be some other way. Sure this is no place for a man to live, if he wants to enjoy himself."

"And where would you live if not in your native land? The savage loves his native heath."

"I know he does, but the real estate men love it better, and that's why land is so dear in America. The Land of Peace and Plenty is the only place to live."

"The Land of Peace and Plenty! Where's that?"

"Oh! 'tis leagues and leagues and leagues from anywhere you know."

"And how did you get there?"

"In a ship, of course. When I was a boy, I sailed over the ocean for six months without finding a single night, nothing but days all the time, until you forgot what darkness was like. Well, one night at twelve o'clock, though 'twas broad daylight, mind you, one of our crew, Martin O'Farrell, was playing 'The Boys of Wexford' on a gadget, when lo and behold! a sea serpent puts his head out of the waters and ses: 'Bravo, Martin,' ses he. 'That's the finest tune

in all the world, but play me a four-hand reel,' ses he, '"The Kerryman's Daughter," for choice, and I'll dance for you until old Ireland is free.' And Martin started to play 'The Kerryman's Daughter' and the sea serpent started to dance, and he kicked up such a devil of a row, and lashed and splashed the waters until our ship got tossed about so badly that she finally foundered, and not a soul was saved but myself."

"And how did you save yourself?"

"Well, when I saw the way things were, I thought to myself that there was trouble ahead, so I lashed a knife to each of my feet, and one on each of my hands, the way you'd see fins on a fish. I put three on my back and so many on my head that you'd think I was a porcupine, and when I looked to the west, I saw land about two or three hundred miles away. 'Fortune favors the brave as well as the foolish,' ses I, and then I started out for the shore."

"You did, is it?"

"If I didn't, how could I be telling you all about it? Well, the sea was alive with hungry sharks,

but every time one swallowed me up, I cut my way through and escaped, only to be swallowed again, but even that had its advantages. I was carried nearer the shore each time, until finally I reached terra firma, as safe and as sound as a Protestant."

"How many sharks did you kill?"

"Just enough to teach the others how to behave themselves."

"And when you reached the shore, what did you do?"

"I dried my clothes on the hot sand, shaved myself with one of the knives I had on my head, and used a pool of water for a looking glass, and when I combed my hair, every lady in the land fell in love with me, but I only fell in love with one."

"And what kind was she?" asked Padna.

"She was a lady of great beauty," said Micus, "and as she passed by she looked into my eyes, and though I might live for ten thousand years I will never forget her. Sure no words that ever were spoken could describe her queenly gait and

inspiring glances. She seemed to have come from some place not yet discovered by man, and looked as lonesome and as beautiful as a lily in a cabbage garden."

"And why did you not follow her and find out something about her?"

"Ah me, sure she disappeared for ever, before I could find any word at all to say. I have seen other beautiful women, but they had only the beauty of flowers which fade and die. But her beauty was the beauty which lives and never dies."

"I suppose it must be that same thing which all the people does be talking about, but don't know what it is at all, at all."

"Sure if you knew all about anything, you wouldn't be talking about it."

"That's true."

"Love is the most beautiful thing in all the world, and it isn't so much anything else as a divine state of mind."

"So 'twas in the Land of Peace and Plenty that you fell in love with a beauty who came into your life for a moment and went out of it for ever?"

"Yes," said Micus.

"An' that's why you've remained an old bachelor, was it?"

"That's the one and only reason."

"I am sorry for you," said Padna.

"You needn't be sorry," said Micus. "If a bachelor has sorrows, he has joys as well, and 'tis better to keep what you have than to lose what you haven't."

"How could you lose what you haven't?"

"Well, you might get it if you tried hard enough, and then only find discontent and disillusionment."

"I'd like to go to the Land of Peace and Plenty. It must be a wonderful place."

"A wonderful place it is, then, surely, and nearly as wonderful as the sun itself."

"When the earth goes too near the sun it is too hot, and when it goes too far away from the sun it is too cold, but in the Land of Peace and Plenty, I suppose it must be always beautiful."

"Indeed and it is."

"What do all the people do there?"

"In the Land of Peace and Plenty, nobody does anything but enjoy themselves."

"And if the Land of Peace and Plenty is such a wonderful place, how is it that the great powers of the world don't go to war for it?" asked Padna.

"Sure they did go to war for it long before you began to make mistakes," answered Micus, "and great battles were fought there too. And after the greatest battle of all was ended, the King ses to all the High Generals: 'Fellow warriors and likewise courageous omadhauns,' ses he, 'what are we fighting for, anyway? The world is large enough for us all, and there's enough of dead men already, and those that aren't dead are alive, and those that are alive are nearly dead, but all the same,' ses he, 'I must compliment you on the magnificent way you slaughtered my fellow countrymen and your own fellow men, though why you did so, or wanted to do so, God alone knows.'"

"Every man is entitled to as much enjoyment as he can afford," said Padna. "Sorrow is the

price of pleasure, and the sport of nations is the curse of mankind."

"We won't discuss international politics. The world was best when people left others to mind their own business."

"Proceed about the King of the Land of Peace and Plenty," said Padna. "Interruptions and digressions are bad unless they're for one's good."

"That's true, but half a loaf is better than no bread when a man isn't hungry."

"Two heads are better than one," said Padna, "and two fools, if they are any way sensible at all, are better than a wife with a bad temper. But comparisons are odious, as the whale said to the grasshopper. Go on with your story."

"Well, the King ses to the Generals, after they had all forgotten what he first started talking about: 'I demand,' ses he, 'in the name of justice, common sense, and humanity, that we will be allowed time to bury our dead, and that there will be no thunderous cannonading of artillery, no charges of cavalry, infantry, nor anything else that might be a breach of the etiquette of war,

until our last man is buried.' And then and there the Generals agreed, and from that day to this, there was never a sound, except of music, heard in the Land of Peace and Plenty."

"I don't quite understand," said Padna.

"Well," said Micus, "don't you see, when the last man was buried, some one else died, and as there will be always some one dying, there will be always some one to be buried in the Land of Peace and Plenty."

"All the water is boiled out of the kettle," said Padna.

"There's plenty more in the well," said Micus.

The Linnet with the Crown of Gold

"WHAT'S troubling you at all? You're not looking yourself to-day," said Padna Dan to his friend Micus Pat, as he cut a switch from a blackthorn tree on the road to Mallow on a May morning.

"There's many a thing that troubles a man that he doesn't like to talk about," said Micus, "and many a thing that he talks about that doesn't trouble him at all."

"Maybe some one died who owed you money," said Padna.

"Well, as you seem to be anxious to know, it was the way that some one died, but the devil a ha'penny did he owe me, no more than yourself or the Pope of Rome," said Micus.

"Was he a member of the Royal Family then,

or some one born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and no more brains in his head than you'd find with a sparrow?"

"He was no way connected with royalty or the aristocracy, but a decent man who always worked for a living, one Lareen, the birdcatcher from Duhallow."

"And what's the use fretting about any one who is dead and gone? Sure we must all die, and maybe there will be no one fretting about ourselves."

"There is some truth in that, but we can't always be as philosophic as we pretend to be."

"And was Lareen of such importance that you can't forget him, now that he's gone to his reward or his deserts, as the case may be?"

"Well," said Micus, "Lareen was a Murphy on his father's side and a Cassidy on his mother's, and both families were noted the world over for their love of sport, black pudding, and fresh drisheens. And Lareen, like his father and grandfather, was a birdcatcher by nature and a shoemaker by profession, and he always made boots and shoes

for the parish priest and the minister, and he used to collect the money at the chapel door on Sundays. There was no man in the seven parishes who could blow the organ for vespers better than himself, but the devil a bit he ever got for all he did for others, except that he contracted rheumatics from walking in the rain while attending funerals of the poor. However, that same had its compensations, because it helped him to remember that he wasn't long for this life, and that he had a soul to save and a wife and family to support. But to go on with my story. One fine morning, as I was reading the newspaper that I got the lend of from the public house opposite the pump at the bend of the road, who should come into the house but Lareen himself, and there and then he up and ses: 'Good morning, Micus,' ses he.

"'Good morning kindly, Lareen,' ses I. 'What's the good word?'

"'Nothing in particular,' ses he.

"'Have you no news at all?' ses I.

"'Yes, I have a little,' ses he.

"'I'd like to hear it then,' ses I.

"'Very well,' ses he. 'The King of Morocco has a corn on his big toe, and he sent to the United States for a specialist to remove it.'

"'Is that so?' ses I. 'Sure 'twould be as cheap to send to London or Dublin or Cork itself for a specialist as the United States,' ses I. 'An operation like that will cost him a lot of money, anyway, but what matter? He don't have to earn it, and the more he spends, the more respectable the people will think he is. But nevertheless 'twould be cheaper for him to cut a piece out of his boot, or cut his toe off altogether, than to send to America for a doctor.'

"'True,' ses he, 'and if we were all to charge as much for the little we do as the doctors and the specialists, 'tis the way that we might make bankrupts of each other overnight, and as a consequence we might all die of want and privation.'

"'That's very true indeed, but is that all the news you have for me?' ses I.

"'Well, not exactly,' ses he. 'There was a man shot in Russia last week, the Grand Duke

of Ballybrophy went to America to be lionized by the republicans and democrats, a kangaroo died in Australia, the King of Italy bought a new hat, and Queen Victoria gave a shilling for the relief of the poor of Ireland.'

"'And tell me,' ses I, 'is it all to be given to the Protestants?'

"'No,' ses he, ''tis to be equally divided among the poor of all classes.'

"'I'm glad to hear that,' ses I, 'because it denotes a fine, broad-minded, and generous spirit. But what pleases me more than anything else is that she has not forgotten that Ireland is still on the map.'

"'Why,' ses he, 'Ireland will never be forgotten while there is money to be made at politics in America, and politics, they say, is the most popular religion in the United States.'

"'And was it to tell me what I know already that brought you here?'

"'No,' ses he. 'I wanted to tell you that I dreamt of my mother's people last night, and that always brings me good luck. So as 'tis a

fine hard frosty day, I'd like to go birdcatching in Fingal's Glen, and catch a dozen linnets, half a dozen finches, and maybe a couple of blackbirds and thrushes. But I haven't the makings of a sprig of birdlime, or a crib, or a good singing bird to bring with me,' ses he.

"'If that is all that's troubling you,' ses I, 'you have no longer any cause to worry. I'll give you the box of birdlime that the bishop himself made me a present of last Easter, and I'll give you the loan of the best singing bird I have in the house, a linnet that would put a nightingale or a prima donna to shame,' ses I.

"And with that I handed him the box of birdlime that was made by the best cobbler in Antrim, and I took down the linnet cage from over the half door, and gave him that also.

"And then ses I, 'Go your way and may God bless you, and if you can't catch birds with my linnet and the bishop's birdlime, you might as well go to America and try and convince the Irish-Americans that they are not a bit better than the Irish at home.'

"'Wisha, bad luck to their impudence,' ses he. 'What do they know about the Irish at home?'

"'The devil a hap'orth,' ses I. And then he put the cage under his arm and ses: 'I wish I knew how to thank you for all your kindness, and now I will trouble you for the loan of your topcoat, the fillings of a pipe, and a box of matches. For 'tis frozen with the cold I'll be, standing behind a furze bush waiting for a flock of linnets to rise, so that I may throw myself down on my face and hands on the wet grass, the way they wouldn't see me at all,' ses he.

"'A good birdcatcher,' ses I, 'will always find a place where he will be able to hide without throwing himself down on the wet grass or soft earth. However, you are welcome to the loan of my old coat, and I will make you a present of a plug of tobacco and a box of matches.'

"So after he put on the coat, he walked away with his 'May the Lord spare and protect you all the days of your life,' and a week passed before he returned. I was eating my breakfast when he called, and as he pushed open the half

door with his 'God bless all here,' I up and ses: 'What luck?' ses I.

"'Don't talk to me about luck,' ses he, as he placed the overcoat, the box of birdlime, and the cage on a chair beside him. 'I'm the happiest man alive,' ses he.

"'I'm sorry to hear that,' ses I.

"'And why, might I ask?' ses he.

"'Well,' ses I, ''tis only selfish people who can be really happy. Howsomever, let me hear what you have to say.'

"'I caught a linnet with a crown of gold,' ses he.

"'You did!' ses I.

"'Yes, I did,' ses he.

"'There must be a finch or a canary in the family then,' ses I.

"'Maybe both,' ses he.

"'How does he sing?' ses I.

"'Sing!' ses he. 'Why, he never stops singing at all, only when the twilight fades and the darkness comes from east and west, and north and south, and the blackness of the night covers up

the hills and the valleys, the trees and the rivers, and the streams and the houses themselves,' ses he.

"'He must be a wonder,' ses I.

"'A wonder he is surely,' ses he. 'He starts at five o'clock in the morning and sings all day.'

"'If that's so,' ses I, 'I'll be outside your door with my ear to the keyhole at quarter to five, so that I can't miss the first note to break the silence and tell us that day is come.'

"'And herself is going to stay up all night, lest she might miss even the flutter of his wings, when he wakes from his sleep,' ses Lareen.

"Well, when the morrow came, I was at Lareen's door at the peep o' day, listening to the sweetest music that was ever heard in town or city, in lonely glen or by the cobbled seashore when the storm does be raging and huge breakers dash themselves to pieces on the treacherous rocks. Wonderful indeed was the song of the linnet with the crown of gold, and musicians came from all parts of the world to hear him, and all listened with great attention and took down in

a book each note as he uttered it. And when they returned home, they made operas, oratorios, and symphonies from the melodies they heard in Lareen's kitchen. And selections were made for the violin, 'cello, and organ, and played at classical concerts where the well-fed fashionable people, who have no more love for art or music than a tinker's donkey, pay for being bored to death. And thus it was that the fame of Lareen's linnet grew until the King of Spain heard all about him, and immediately he sailed away from the shores of his native country with more money in his pocket than all the kings of Europe could earn in ten thousand years. And when, after a weary journey, he found himself seated by the fire talking to Lareen, all of a sudden he up and ses: 'Lareen,' ses he, 'I'll give you a golden guinea for every mistake you have made since you came to the use of reason, if you will give me the linnet with the crown of gold,' ses he.

"'And did you accept his offer?' ses I.

"'No, I did not,' ses he.

"'You damn fool,' ses I. 'Sure, if you only

got a half sovereign inself for every mistake you made since you were born, you would have been made a millionaire on the spot.'

"'And how do you know I have made so many mistakes?' ses he.

"'Why, you omadhaun,' ses I, 'don't you know as yet that nearly everything we do is some kind of a mistake or other, but we don't know it until we are told so by some one else?'

"'I do not,' ses he. 'And I am just as well pleased that I don't.'

"'And what did the king say when he heard your refusal?' ses I.

"He took out his handkerchief and began to cry, and then ses he: 'I will give you your choice of a wife, and I will give you your own way as long as you can stand it, if you will give me the linnet, and I will make you a Knight of the Spade and Turnip besides.'

"'Thank you kindly,' ses Lareen. 'But, not for all the women that ever made fools of their husbands would I part with the linnet with the crown of gold.'

"So the king sailed away that night with sadness in his heart and tears in his eyes, and 'twas said that he was never heard whistling anything till the day he died but the song of the linnet with the crown of gold.

"And then the King of Prussia came and ses to Lareen: 'There's going to be a great war one day,' ses he, 'and if you will give me the linnet with the golden crown, I will give you half of France, the whole of Belgium, and maybe the Tower of London as well, when the war is over.'

"'Don't count your chickens before they are hatched,' ses Lareen, 'and remember the gentleman who went to live on St. Helena after the battle of Waterloo.'

"'Oh, the spalpeen!' ses he. 'He was bound to be caught anyway, because he overestimated his own importance.'

"'Just like a good many more people who don't know it,' ses Lareen.

"'So you won't give me the linnet?' ses the king.

"'No,' ses Lareen. And with that the king shook his head and went his way.

"The next to come was the King of Japan. And he up and ses: 'There's going to be great ructions on the other side of the Atlantic another day, and if you will give me the linnet with the golden crown, I will give you your choice of New York or Boston when the war is over.'

"'And how are you going to land an army, might I ask?' ses Lareen.

"'With the aid of the navy,' ses the king, with a smile.

"'Bedad, I wonder if that ever occurred to America,' ses Lareen.

"'I don't know, and what's more, I don't care,' ses the king.

"'There's too much old talk about peace, I'm thinking,' ses Lareen.

"'That's so,' ses the king. 'And talk by itself never did anything. Why, man alive, there is no such thing as peace in the world. The very people who advocate peace are always at cross-purposes with some one else. Sure every thing that's

alive fights, from the fish in the sea to the birds of the air, and those who are not prepared always gets the worst of it. A man with a gun is better than a man with a blackthorn stick in his fist at any time, even though he might be an Irishman inself,' ses he.

"'And a small dog often leathered the devil out of a large dog when he caught him unawares,' ses Lareen.

"'Now you're talking sense,' ses the King. 'And 'tis only after a fight that you can tell who is the better man. Life itself is a fight from beginning to end, and when we cease fighting, well,' ses he, 'that's the end of us. But be all that as it may, what about giving me the linnet?'

"'I wouldn't part with him,' ses Lareen, 'for all the money in the world.'

"'Well,' ses the King, ''tis a great pity that you don't know you are so foolish.' And with that he put on his hat, curled his moustache, and walked out the door.

"And every day brought some mighty monarch or other to Lareen's cottage, and each and every

one tried their very best to persuade him to part with the linnet, but they all went as they came, because Lareen was determined that he would never part with him until the day of his death."

"And what happened in the end?" said Padna.

"One day, after the King of the Ballyallen Islands came and offered all his wealth and possessions for the loan of the linnet to entertain some of his wife's people at the Royal Palace during the Christmas holidays, a large grey cat from the police sergeant's house across the road tumbled the cage from the wall, opened the door, and golloped up the linnet, with less ceremony than if he was a mouse or a cockroach."

"And what happened then?"

"Lareen killed the cat and made a fur cap with its skin and sent it to the Czar of Russia to remind him to be kind to the poor musicians, because there's nothing finer in the country than its music, except its literature, of course," said Micus.

"Lareen was a fool not to sell the linnet when he got the first good offer. Any man who leaves

opportunity slip between his fingers, so to speak, is a fool, and the man who doesn't know what he likes is the greatest fool of all. 'Pon my word, I don't know what to think of half the people I hear about," said Padna.

"Neither do I, but while the song of a bird and a sense of duty means more for some than either money or glory, there's hope for the world," said Micus.

"Bedad, I don't doubt but there is," said Padna.

The Man with the Wooden Leg

"A MAN who loves nature and lives near the country need never be lonesome," said Micus Pat to his friend Padna Dan, as they strolled along a mountain road near the southwestern coast.

"That's very true," said Padna. "And if a man owes a lot of money, he has the consolation of knowing that he will not easily be forgotten."

"Like every other man of poetic temperament, I think more about the glories of nature, for they are both inspiring and incomprehensible, than about what I owe, or the people who were good enough to oblige me with the loan of money," said Micus.

"'Tis real decent of you to say so, and you

such a judge of everything but your own idiosyncrasies," said Padna.

"Look around and about you," said Micus, "from the north to the south, and from the east to the west, and from the west again back to the east, and from the south again to the north, and if you are not impressed with the wonder and grandeur with which you are surrounded, you might as well give up your life to reading the newspapers and talking politics at the street corners."

"Beauty confronts us at every turn. The saffron moon peeps through the vista of pines on the distant hills, the sky is all ablaze with twinkling stars, and not a sound is heard except that of my own voice, and the creak of a toad in the rushes," said Padna.

"I can hear, or I seem to hear," said Micus, "the rippling of a brook as it joins the Owenacurra on its way to the sea, and it is the sweetest of all music, because it is of nature's own making, and more soothing to a troubled mind or a weary spirit than all the melodies made by man."

"I hear no sound but my own voice," said Padna.

"Put your ear to the ground, and if you are not deaf you will hear the maddening rush of the brook and the low murmuring of the Owenacurra and the heart of the world itself beating," said Micus.

"I will, then," said Padna, as he put his ear to the ground.

"Well," said Micus, "do you hear anything?"

"I hear the pulse of the earth."

"Isn't it wonderful?"

"'Tis wonderful, surely."

"I knew you'd like it."

"Sure 'tis myself always loves to walk alone by the seashore when the world does be sleeping, and listen to the melancholy cry of the sea lark and the curlew, and the soft splash of the waves against the boulders on the beach on a dark night without any light at all, except maybe the flash from the lightship, or the glow from the binnacle lamp of some passing vessel, and she

sailing over the seas with a cargo of groundsel for the Emperor of Japan's linnets. There's an eeriness about the night that creates an atmosphere of poetry and mystery, the like of which we never experience in the most glorious sunshine, even when we might be in love itself, and listening to the silvery speech of the most beautiful woman in all the land," said Padna.

"When a man is listening to the silvery speech of some lovely woman, he never knows how expensive 'tis going to be for him afterwards."

"The silvery speech of women is a magnificent thing, but their golden silence is a more magnificent thing still."

"That's true indeed, but let us forget all about the contrary creatures for a little while, and I will tell you a story that the Emperor of Russia would give his two thumbs and two little fingers to hear."

"And what is it all about?" said Padna.

"'Tis the story of a man with a wooden leg," said Micus.

"Begin," said Padna.

"Well," said Micus, as he filled his pipe, "as I was sauntering home the other night, I dropped into the Half Way House to get a toothful of something to keep out the cold, when lo and behold! who should come in and flop down beside me but a one-legged sailor and he minus an eye as well, and no more hair on his head than you'd find on a yellow turnip. He was the first to speak, and he up and ses: 'Good night, stranger,' ses he, as he poked the fire with his wooden leg, and lit his pipe with a piece of his old straw hat.

"'Good night kindly,' ses I.

"''Tis a cold kind of night,' ses he.

"'The devil of a cold night entirely,' ses I.

"''Tis indeed,' ses he, 'and a bad night for a poor man who has neither friends nor relations, or one to bother their heads about him, or even the price of a drink inself.'

"'If 'tis a drink you want,' ses I, 'all you have to do is to call for it, and I will pay. What will you have?' ses I.

"'I'll take all I can get for nothing, and give as little as I can help in return. I'm a capitalist

by temperament, but poor because I didn't get a chance of exercising my talents,' ses he.

"'I suppose you wouldn't say no to a glass of whiskey,' ses I.

"'I'd say no to nothing except a black eye,' ses he.

"'You couldn't afford to have an eye blackened, when you have only one good eye already,' ses I. And then and there I treated him to two glasses of whiskey, and when he had them swallowed, I up and ses: 'How did you lose your lamp?' meaning his eye, of course.

"'In a duel with the King of Spain,' ses he.

"'Glory be to the Lord!' ses I. 'All over a woman, I presume?'

"'Of course,' ses he. And then the salt tears flowed down his sunken cheeks and formed a pool on the floor.

"'Tell me,' ses I, 'was she a very handsome woman?'

"'She was the most beautiful woman in all the world,' ses he, 'except my seventh wife, who was more beautiful than Venus, herself.'

"'And what happened to your seventh wife?' ses I.

"'Oh, she was too fond of her own people, and they got her to do all their washing and scrubbing, and never gave her a moment's rest until they killed her with hard work. And then the devil blast the one of them came to the funeral, and 'twas strangers that lowered her into the grave, and no one but myself and the clergyman said a prayer for the repose of her soul,' ses he.

"'She was too good to be remembered, I suppose,' ses I.

"'She was, God help us,' ses he. 'But my ninth wife wasn't either a Venus or a Helen of Troy. She was so ugly that one day when we were going over a bridge, the river stopped, and didn't begin to flow again until she left the town.'

"'You had a lot of wives,' ses I.

"'Yes, I had a few, but 'tis a mistake to marry more than ten or twelve times,' ses he.

"Well, when I saw that his grief was getting the better of him, I ses: 'Let us not talk any

more about your eye, but tell me how you lost your leg, and I'll give you another glass of grog.'

"'I never told that story to any one for less than three glasses of grog and a small bottle of rum to bring home with me for the morning, except one time I told it to the Shah of Persia for nothing, when he promised me the hand of his favourite daughter in marriage.'

"'Tell me the story, whatever 'twill cost,' ses I.

"'All right,' ses he. And then he moved closer to the fire, and this is what he told:

"'It was a cold and stormy night in the long long ago. The thunder rolled and the lightning flashed and the rain fell down in torrents. I was aboard ship in the middle of the ocean; the stars and moon were screened and not a light was seen except a glimmer from the port side of another vessel labouring in the storm. Peal after peal of thunder resounded until one thought that the gods of war on all the other planets had gone mad, and were discharging their heavy artillery at the earth, trying to shatter it to atoms. The canvas

was torn from the yards, and spar after spar fell, until nothing but the masts remained.

"'And as the storm grew in intensity, the ship lurched and the masts themselves fell, and crashed through her as though she was only made of matchwood; and in their fall they killed as many as five and twenty men at a time. And as the last mast made splinters of the deck house, the good ship *Nora Crena* sank beneath the waves never to rise again.

"'Not a soul was saved but myself, and in those days I was a great swimmer, and I swam and swam until I found a piece of floating wreckage, and clung to it the way you'd see a barnacle clinging to the rocks. I remained that way for three days and three nights, without a bit to eat or anything to read, and nothing to drink but salt water. And sure I need not tell you that the more you'd drink of that, the more thirsty you'd become.

"'Well, at the end of the third night, I was cast up on a little bit of a rock no larger than a stepmother's supper, and while I was wondering

how I could get a bit to eat or reach the shore in safety, a large fish about the size of a shark, but much more refined and respectable looking, came up from the depths of the sea, and as he came ashore and sat beside me, he up and ses: "God bless all here," ses he.

""""And you too," ses I.

""""How are you feeling to-day?" ses he.

""""A good deal worse than yesterday," ses I. "Can't you see, you foolish omadhaun, that I am all dripping wet from being saturated in the waters of the briny deep, for this last three days and nights?"

""""That's nothing at all," ses he. "How would you like to be dripping wet like myself for twenty years or more?"

""""Are you as old as all that?" ses I.

""""Every day of it, if not more. My poor mother, God help her, had all our birthdays written down in a book, and she had us all called after the saints of America. Originality was a weakness with her, but now she's dead and gone, more's the pity!" ses he.

""""What did she die of?" ses I. "Too much old talk, maybe."

""""She didn't die a natural death at all, but was caught in a net and sold to a fishmonger, the same as everyone belonging to me, both young and old, and the list includes aunts and uncles, first and second cousins, fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, and they the first blight on a man's happiness. And here I am now," ses he, "and I a poor orphan and the last of my name and race." And then the tears began to come to his eyes, and when he had stopped weeping he up and ses: "Do you know," ses he, "that I'm a misanthrope?"

""""I'm not a bit surprised at that," ses I, "if, as you say, all belonging to you were philanthropists, and gave up their lives for the sustenance and maintenance of the people in the great world beyond. Indiscriminate philanthropy like that would make a pessimist of any one. Howsomever, things might be better or worse. You might have been caught in a net yourself, and sold to a family of tinkers, and I'm sure all your relations wouldn't

bother their heads about you, or care whether you were boiled or fried. They would logically conclude that as they were so numerous, they could afford to lose at least one of the family," ses I.

"'"About that I haven't the remotest doubt," ses he. "But what I can't understand is why some women will marry their husbands so that they can help their own sisters' or brothers' children, as the case may be."

"'"Well," ses I, "once women arrive at the age of indiscretion, there's no use trying to understand them."

"'"Of course," ses he, "the great trouble with women, I'm thinking, is that they don't understand themselves or any one else, either."

"'"Be all that and more as it may," ses I, "even the most foolish women are well able to look after themselves. But old talk like this would never get me home. And unless you will take me on your back and swim with me to the shore, 'tis the way I'll be after dying both from cold and starvation."

"'"'There was many a better man died from hunger," ses he. "And better men have died from believing all their wives told them. Howsomever, I will take you to the shore on one condition."

"'"'And what may that be?" ses I.

"'"'Well," ses he, "you must promise that you will never again taste a piece of fish while you live."

"'"'Why, that's an easy matter," says I. "Sure, of course, I'll promise you that much, or as much more if you like."

"'"'That's just like a coward," ses he. "A coward would promise anything to save his skin, and make a promise as quickly as he'd break one."

"'"'I don't see for the life of me why you won't take the word of a decent man," ses I.

"'"'Wisha, who told you that you were decent?" ses he. "Can't I see and tell what you are by the shifty look in your eye. To be candid, I wouldn't trust you as far as I'd throw you, and you with two ferrety eyes, and they so close together that only a rogue, a thief, a

bla'guard, or a bully could own them, and one of them blind at that."

"'"If you only knew how I lost that winker," ses I, "'tis the way you'd be taking off your hat to me, and shaking hands with yourself for having met the likes of me."

"'"God knows," ses he, "there's no limit to the conceit of some and the ignorance of others. I have eaten my dinner off men and women too, that wouldn't recognise you at a dog fight. There was the King of Himyumhama and his royal daughters, for instance, who were drowned in the Skidderymackthomas. And there were two American millionaires besides, and they as tender and as nourishing as a boiled chicken or a porterhouse steak."

"'"I bet you," ses I, "that you never ate Irish stew."

"'"And who the devil would want to eat Irish stew but the Chinese? Sure the Irish themselves never eat it. However," ses he, "there's no use trying to convince me against my will. I'm a man of fixed ideas, and people with fixed ideas

are nearly as impossible as women. Nevertheless, I suppose you are anxious to get to the shore, and for that I don't blame you. Like us all, you carry your character in your face, and I won't lose much by parting company with you. I'm sorry all the same that you haven't an honest countenance, because a face like yours would do you no more good among decent people than letters of introduction in the United States of America, and they are no more use to any one than the measles or the whooping cough."

""" Well," ses I, "don't you think you are talking too much and doing too little?"

""" That may be. Sure, my poor father always told me I'd make a good politician. Howsomever, sit up on my back, and I'll bring you safe and sound to the shore." And without waiting to say as much as thank you, or anything else, I jumped on his back, and he swam for a few hundred yards, but, lo and behold you! all of a sudden he stopped and turned around to me and ses: "Do you know what?" ses he. "I'm losing confidence in you."

"'"'Indeed, then, is that so?" ses I.

"'"'Yes, it is then," ses he, "and the little bit of respect I had for you in the beginning is nearly all gone."

"'"'Is there any way by which I can inspire confidence in you, at all?" ses I.

"'"'I don't believe there is," ses he. "I'm a patriot and want to do something for the race, besides making speeches about the achievements of my ancestors and getting well paid for my pains, and getting all my children and relations good jobs as well."

"'"'And what is it you want to do, at all?" ses I.

"'"'I want to make sure," ses he, "that you will keep your promise never to eat fish again."

"'"'I will keep my promise," ses I.

"'"'I don't believe a word of it," ses he. "There's nobody forgotten sooner than a good friend. But I'll make sure that you will remember me, as the traveling salesman said to the landlady, when he ran away without paying for his board and lodging."

""""'Tis true," ses I, "that we forget our friends when they cease to be an advantage to us, and equally true that we lose respect for our enemies when they cease to torment and persecute us, but all the same I can't see why you won't finish your job, considering the good start you have made."

""""I never pay any attention to flattery," ses he. "But whist. I have an idea! I suppose you often heard tell of the law of compensation?"

""""Many and many a time," ses I.

""""All right then!" ses he. "You know, of course, that we must pay a price for everything we get in this life, and some, they say, pay in the other world as well. That being so, then you must pay for your passage to the shore. And as I haven't had my breakfast yet, I think you couldn't do better than forfeit one of your legs, and in that way you would serve the double purpose of paying for your journey and helping me to appease the pangs of hunger. And, besides, you will be sure to remember me, and 'tis a matter for yourself whether you will keep your promise or not."

And then and there he did a double somersault, and I fell into the water, and before I had realized what had happened, my leg was bitten off. And while I tried to keep myself afloat by hanging on to some seaweed, he up and ses: "Bedad," ses he, "that was the nicest meal I had for many a long day. And I think now that I like the Irish better than the French, Germans, Scotch, Americans, or the Australians, and I have tasted them all."

""""How do you like the English?" ses I.

""""Don't talk to me about the English," ses he, "I wouldn't taste one of them if I had to go hungry for ever, for the stupid way they treated the Irish."

""""God knows then, in a way, I wouldn't blame you. But 'tis a queer thing for you to leave me here to drown when you could carry me safely to the shore."

""""Tell me, are you a Protestant?" ses he.

""""I am, God forgive me," ses I.

""""I am sorry for that," ses he.

""""And why?" ses I.

"'"Well, I don't think I can carry you to the shore at all now," ses he.

"'"How's that?" ses I. "Sure all the Protestants are fine, decent, respectable people."

"'"They think they are," ses he. "But who's to know whether they are or not? The Protestants would eat fish every day of the week, if they could get it, but the Catholics will only eat it on Fridays, and wouldn't eat it then if they could help it. And moreover, the Protestants have all the good jobs in Ireland and the United States, but for choice, 'tis a Freemason I'd be myself, if I could."

"'"That's not the question at all," ses I. "Are you, or are you not, going to bring me to the shore?"

"'"Well, I'm about sick and tired of you now, anyway," ses he, "so sit up on my back, and I'll land you at the Old Head of Kinsale." And sure enough he kept his word, and I was landed high and dry on the rocks of my native parish in less time than you'd take to lace your shoe. And all he said as he went his way was: "Good-by, now,

and don't forget all I told you. I have an invitation to lunch at the Canary Islands, and I'll be late if I don't hurry." And with that, he plunged beneath a breaker, and that was the last I ever saw of the fish who ate my leg off, and made me a cripple for life."

"'And did you keep your promise?' ses I to the man with the wooden leg, when he had finished his story."

"'No,' ses the man with the wooden leg, 'but instead, I swore ten thousand holy oaths that I would eat nothing but fish, if I lived to be as old as Batty Hayes's old goat. And that's why I am always so thirsty.'"

"Bedad, but that's a queer story, surely," said Padna. "I suppose the fish would have eaten his other leg off, only it might spoil his appetite for lunch."

"Very likely," said Micus.

"Well, I don't believe I could beat that for a yarn," said Padna.

"I wouldn't try, if I were you," said Micus.

The Hermit of the Grove

"WHAT do you think of the weather?" said Padna Dan to Micus Pat, as he leaned over the half-door, and looked up at the sky.

"Oh," said Micus, as he struck a match on the heel of his shoe, "I think we will have a fine day, that's if it don't either rain or snow. And snow and rain inself is better than a drought, that would parch the whole countryside, and bleach every blade of grass in the fields as white as linen."

"The two things in life you can never depend on," said Padna, "are women and the weather. But as the hermit of Deirdre's Grove said to me the other day, when I happened upon him as he was strolling about looking for something he

never lost: 'Every season,' ses he, 'has its own particular charm, and we all have our faults as well as our virtues.'

"And what kind of a man was he at all, to be looking for something he never lost?" said Micus.

"He was a man just like one of ourselves. Sure that's what we all do, from the day we open our eyes until we close them again upon the world," said Padna.

"I never knew that there was a hermit in Deirdre's Grove," said Micus.

"Neither did I," said Padna, "until one day last week when I went looking for hazel-nuts for the grandchildren, and I came upon a man of strange appearance, and he with long flowing beard, dark black curly hair, and a physique surpassing anything I have seen for many a day. His general demeanour was very impressive indeed, and a kindly look lit up his well-chiseled face. As I approached him, I wondered what manner of man he was, but he was first to break the silence. And what he said was: 'Good morrow, stranger,' ses he.

"'Good morrow and good luck,' ses I.

"'May the blessing of God be with you,' ses he.

"'May the blessing of God be with us all,' ses I.

"'Amen to that,' ses he.

"'Amen, amen!' ses I.

"'Would you mind telling me what day of the year is it, and what year of the century is it, if you please?' ses he.

"'I can easily tell you that,' ses I, 'but I couldn't tell you the time of day if you were to make me as gay as a sprite, as blithe as a lark, and as nimble and fresh as a hare in the month of March. This is St. Crispin's Day,' ses I, 'and every shoemaker in Christendom who knows how to enjoy himself will be as drunk as a lord before the sun goes down.'

"'I wouldn't blame them for getting drunk,' ses he, 'for hammering on the sole of a shoe from daylight to dark is no way for a man to enjoy himself. But now,' ses he, 'if you want to know the time of day, I can tell you that.'

"'Of course, I'd like to know the time of day,' ses I.

"'All right,' ses he, 'come along.' And then we walked to a sun-splashed glade, and he looked up at the sun itself, and turned to me, and ses, with the greatest gentleness: ''Tis just a quarter to twelve,' ses he.

"'That's a wonderful clock you have,' ses I.

"''Tis the most wonderful clock in all the world, and never once ran down since it was set a-going long ago before Adam was a boy,' ses he.

"'But 'tisn't every one can tell you the time of day by it,' ses I.

"'I know that,' ses he. 'And 'tisn't every one who can tell you all the other things they should know, and 'tisn't every one who can forget all the things not worth remembering,' ses he.

"'That's true,' ses I, 'and if we could only remember all that is good for us, and forget all that is bad for us, we needn't go to any one for advice. But we either remember too much, or forget too much, and that's why there is so much discontent and trouble everywhere. However,

be that as it may, I'd like to know how you manage to enjoy yourself in this eerie place without any one to keep you company,' ses I.

"'I don't want company,' ses he, 'because I came here to get rid of myself.'

"'Are you a married man?' ses I.

"'No,' ses he, 'I escaped.'

"'That's a strange state of affairs,' ses I. 'Sure I always thought that the only way a man could get rid of himself was to get lost, so to speak, in the highways and byways of matrimony, and that he would be so busy trying to please his wife and children that he wouldn't have any time to think of himself.'

"'There are more ways of killing a dog than by making him commit suicide,' ses he.

"'That's so,' ses I. 'And there are more ways of getting drunk than paying for what you drink. And many a man can't feel natural at all, until he is so blind drunk that he don't know what he does be saying.'

"'Yes,' ses he, 'and a man might live without working if he could get any one to support him.

But no matter what happens, time and the world rolls by as indifferently as though there was nothing worth bothering about. And after all,' ses he, 'what is the world but a whirling mass of inconsistencies, and everything changes but man. He has no more sense now than ever he had. And more's the pity, for women are as deceitful as ever.'

"'But you haven't told me how you succeeded in getting rid of yourself?' ses I.

"'Well,' ses he, 'I only got rid of myself, in a measure, of course, by escaping from the thralls of convention, and coming to live the life of a recluse in this shady and lonely grove. And while I am here, 'tis consoling to know that I cannot injure anybody by doing them good turns, nor can I be of any assistance to them by being their enemies. A decent enemy,' ses he, 'oftentimes is worth ten thousand friends, who would only do you a kindness for the sake of talking about it afterwards. But the best and most charitable way to behave towards those who try to injure you is to treat them one and all with silent

contempt. That will hurt them more than anything else. The tongue may cut like a scissors, but silence gives the deepest wound.'

"'That was well spoken for a lonely man,' ses I.

"'There are worse things than loneliness,' ses he, 'and, strictly speaking, we never feel really lonesome until we find ourselves in the midst of a crowd. And we are never in better company than when we take our place among the trees of a glorious forest like this, where nature has so plentifully bestowed her choicest gifts. I never felt lonesome since I left the noise of the cities behind me, and as I lie awake on my couch at night, I ever long for the morning, so that I may hear the birds on the wing and the birds on the branches singing their praises to the Lord. Aye and I never tire of watching the rabbit and the weasel, the fox and the hare, or listening to the droning of the bee,' ses he.

"'To live close to and feel the divine influence of nature must be a wonderful thing surely, but I am sorry to say that 'tis the ugly in nature that

interests me more than anything else, and the sting of a bee or a mosquito affects me more than the beauty of the sunset,' ses I.

"'Why, man alive,' ses he, 'there's nothing ugly in nature. And the sting of an insect, like the slur of a friend, is a thing to be forgotten and not remembered. But for all that, insects with the capacity for causing annoyance have their uses. And those who never lift their eyes to the skies, so to speak, to look at other worlds than their own, will never feel lonesome while they have bees, wasps, and mosquitoes to torment them.'

"''Tis the devil of a thing,' ses I, 'when you come to think of it, that man can never really enjoy himself. When his wife or daughters, as the case may be, stop nagging at him, his friends commence to turn on him, or the wild animals of the earth, such as bugs and mosquitoes, will try to drive him to desperation.'

"'Very true, indeed,' ses he, 'but we must cultivate patience in all things, and self-control as well, if we want to be comparatively happy.'

"'Patience,' ses he, 'is the next best thing to stupidity. And 'tis nothing more nor less than an infinite capacity for taking pains.'

"'And what's genius then?' ses I.

"'Genius,' ses he, 'is the blossom of inspiration.'

"'I am beginning at long last,' ses I, 'to see some of the advantages of being a recluse. It makes a man think more than pleases those who disagree with him.'

"'You are still a novice at philosophy,' ses he, 'and when you can understand why people won't associate with others, you will know why they keep to themselves.'

"'Oh,' ses I, 'I always want to be with my friends, and live as comfortably as I can. But evidently you don't care where you live, or how you live.'

"'Well,' ses he, 'I live in the present, the past, and the future, and though I dwell in a hut at the foot of the hills beyond, I am as happy as a cow in clover. And if all the water in the ocean was to be turned into whiskey, and if all the fish and

the Sunday excursionists were to drink themselves to death, I don't believe that 'twould interfere with my comfort. I have all I want,' ses he, 'and I know it, and that's the only time a man can be happy.'

"'And why don't you write a poem?' ses I.

"'I live one,' ses he, 'and that's much better. I love the rustle of the leaves and every sound in the woods. All that grows and lives and dies interests and inspires me. And the only thing that makes me sad is that I am not a vegetarian. But,' ses he, 'I'd be one in the morning if I could get as much satisfaction from eating a handful of hazel-nuts, or a few skeeories or blackberries, as from feasting on a roast partridge.'

"'And that,' ses I, 'just goes to prove that we would all be decent if our decency wouldn't interfere with our happiness. Nevertheless, a man who can drift away from his fellow men and live alone in a wood must be the descendant of some ancient line of kings, or else he must be one of those highly civilized people we read about in books. Or perhaps a species of snob who cannot

see the difference between his own foolishness and the foolishness of others. Such a one usually thinks he is better than his equals and his superiors as well.'

"'Very often,' ses he, 'when nature makes one man better than another, he thinks 'tis his privilege to make others as bad as himself, so to speak. And to be a success, a man must be a snob of some kind, or else have no more brains than a herring.'

"'Snobbery is the greatest of all virtues, because it makes us feel better than we are. Take the Protestants, for instance,' ses I.

"'Snobbery is an inheritance with them,' ses he. 'And 'twas they brought democracy to America. And what, after all, is democracy but the highest form of snobocracy? It begets self-deception in us all, and makes the beggar think he is as good as the king, and the fool think he is as good as the scholar. Aye,' ses he, 'and it makes the monied vulgarian think he is as good as those who only tolerate him. Democracy only gives the downtrodden an opportunity of becom-

ing snobs. 'Tis true, of course,' ses he, 'that the aristocracy couldn't exist only for the common people, and the common people couldn't learn the art of snobbery only for the aristocracy.'

"'But good breeding will always show in a man,' ses I.

"'Yes,' ses he, 'but some are too well bred to be mannerly, and others are too mannerly to be just merely polite. Politeness can be acquired,' ses he, 'but good manners must be born with us. The most ignorant and ill-bred are oftentimes the most polite class of people. And you don't have to spend a year with a man to know whether or not he is a gentleman. The very good manners of some is the most offensive thing about them.'

"''Tis wonderful astuteness of observation, you have entirely,' ses I, 'and I think it is a shame for a man with your insight to be wasting your time in this dreary grove, when you could be giving pleasure and instruction to the poor and ignorant in the outer world.'

"'Why should I spoil the happiness of the ignorant?' ses he. 'What, might I ask, has the

world gained by two thousand years of culture? What is the use of educating people who at a moment's notice will go to the wars and slaughter each other for the sake of pleasing the kings and rulers of Christendom?'

"'I'm afraid you are a selfish man,' ses I.

"'Without a tinge of selfishness no man is any good,' ses he.

"'And don't you do anything at all for others?' ses I.

"'Oh, yes,' ses he. "I keep out of their way, and you don't know what a kindness that is. Those who don't bore me,' ses he, 'I bore them. And that is one of the reasons why I keep so much to myself.'

"'And why don't you keep a record of all your thoughts and write them down in a book?' ses I.

"'I might be hanged, drawn and quartered, and beheaded besides, if I were to do that. But, nevertheless, I have preserved a few stray thoughts that may help to amuse the ignorant after I am dead and gone,' ses he.

"'Where are they?' ses I.

"'They are written in large letters on the trees of the grove,' ses he. And then he took my arm, and we walked from tree to tree, and as we went our way, we read as follows:

"'A democrat is one who is sorry that he is not an aristocrat, and an aristocrat is a snob, and doesn't know it.

"'If you think long enough, you will discover that such a thing as equality could never exist, because we all imagine we are better or worse than some one else.

"'People who don't think before marriage learn to do so after, but better late than never.

"'If our friends were as generous as we would wish them to be, we would have no respect for their foolishness.

"'Flies never frequent empty jam-pots, but money always brings friends.

"'The man who seeks a bubble reputation in the newspapers must always keep reminding the public that he doesn't want to be forgotten.

"'It is no easy matter to praise ourselves with-

out abusing others, or to abuse others without praising ourselves.

"'Speech is a blessing to those who have not the courage to carry out their threats.

"'Any fool can smash the shell of an egg into ten thousand pieces, but who can put it together again?

"'When a man takes a false step, he must suffer the consequences, and if he is sensible, he will do so cheerfully.

"'Many say all the things they should be content with thinking, and brilliance, within limits, often only leads to chaos.

"'Congenital stupidity is such a potent factor with most of us that we never know our limitations until we examine our mistakes.

"'Most people are led through life while thinking they are leaders.

"'If we could only see half the comedy of life, we would become pessimists.

"'The man who could be spoilt by success would not be saved by adversity.

"'The great are not always humble, and the humble are not always great.

"'Silence is often more the sign of stupidity than wisdom.

"'We can keep our enemies by continuing to treat them badly, and lose our friends by treating them too well.

"'Wisdom after the event is only repentance.'"

"Bedad," said Micus, "he knew a thing or two."

"No doubt about it," said Padna.

"And 'twas by writing down his thoughts on the bark of trees that he spent his time," said Micus.

"Yes," said Padna. "And 'tis better a man should write down his thoughts, and then forget them, than to leave them die in his mind, or maybe eat into his heart and send him to an early grave."

"Many a man went to his grave for saying too much," said Micus.

"And many a man went to his grave for saying nothing at all," said Padna.

The King of Goulnaspurra

THE cold has left the breeze, the lonely moon sails over the hills, bats are on the wing, the owl rests on the barn door, the badger is gone in search of his prey, the otter scurries through the stream, and the nightingale with his rich, melodious note fills the air with sweetness," said Padna to his friend Micus.

"It is a glorious night for a ramble," said Micus, "and as we have nothing to do, we might as well take a stroll through the woods, and we may find something to talk about. I too like to watch the moon wandering all alone through the sky at the dead of the night, and no one to keep her company but the stars, and they no company for any one but the poets themselves."

"And the poets are the best company in the

whole world," said Padna, "except the dead and they that can't do an injury to any one at all. However, the moon does be kept busy throwing light on a troubled world, and sometimes as she floats through the sky I seem to see a blush on her face as though she was shocked at the badness that steals into the hearts of the young and the old at the close of day. Night is the time that the Devil has his fling, and evil lurks behind everything that is beautiful and enchanting. When there is no moon in the sky, badness does be everywhere, and there does be trembling in every innocent heart until the darkness of night is dispelled by the rising sun, and the first chirrup of the birds is heard, and the cock's shrill crow tells us that day is come."

"The power and majesty of the sun is astounding. With a grace and a gentleness beyond compare, he closes the door of night and greets the waking world with a smile. And the man who can find pleasure looking at the moon in a starry sky should be as happy as a king upon his throne," said Micus.

"Kings," said Padna, "are expensive ornaments, but they are not always happy, if what we hear is true. And the only difference between a king and an ordinary poor man, like one of ourselves, is that we must pay for what we eat, whereas kings get paid for eating, drinking, carousing, and doing what they please."

"The real difference between a king and the common man is a lot of brassy buttons, a high hat with an ostrich plume in it maybe, a silver sword at his side, gold buckles on his shoes, and a few medals on his breast," said Micus.

"And what does a king want a sword for?" said Padna.

"You might as well ask me what do we want kings for, and why they get so much for all the things they don't do. And sure, you wouldn't know a king from any other man if you saw him in his nightshirt. Kingship is the easiest of all professions and the hardest of all trades, because once a man is a king he has no chance of getting a rest until some one fires a bomb at his head or puts poison in his tea," said Micus.

"Well," said Padna, "there is a compensation in all things, and when a man is not fit for anything else, it is a good job for him that he can be a king."

"I suppose," said Micus, "you never heard tell of the King of Goulnaspurra?"

"I did not," said Padna. "Who the blazes was he?"

"He was a distant relation of my own on the wife's side, and so called because he was the best man in a town of two dozen inhabitants," said Micus.

"And what did he do for a living at all?" said Padna.

"He was a mason by trade, and 'tis said that he built more ditches than all the kings in Christendom put together, and there wasn't a better birdcatcher in the whole country than himself. Well, after he had worked some forty years or more in all kinds of weather, he found himself at last on the flat of his back in the Poorhouse Hospital, and no better to look at than an old sweeping brush worn to the stump and kept in

the back yard for beating the dogs. And there he remained pining away like a snowball in the sun, until one day the doctor, who wanted a little exercise and diversion, approached him and ses: 'Good morrow, Malachi, King of Goulnaspurra,' ses he.

"'Good morrow kindly and good luck,' ses Malachi. 'What's the best news to-day?'

"'Oh,' ses the doctor, 'the poor are thought as little about as ever, and the same friendly relations exist between the clergy and the rich.'

"'God forgive the clergy for their respectability. It spoils some to make gentlemen of them,' ses Malachi.

"'That's true,' ses the doctor, 'but now as regards yourself, I want to tell you that you needn't worry about looking for a job any more, because you will either be above with St. Patrick and his chums by this day week, or somewhere else. It all depends on how you behaved yourself.'

"'Won't you take a chair and sit down for awhile?' ses Malachi. 'That's the first bit of

strange news I have had since I heard that England made the discovery that the most stupid thing she ever did was to treat the Irish badly.'

"'Thanks for your kind offer,' ses the doctor, 'but I am in a hurry to-day. I think that I prescribed arsenic instead of olive oil for one of my patients in Tipperary last week. So I must go and see how he is getting along, and if I don't get there in time to cure him inself, I'll be in time for the funeral, though 'tis against the rules of my profession to attend the funerals of your patients, whether you are responsible or not for their death. But 'tis all the same to us. We get paid anyway.'

"'Olive oil is good for the hair, I believe,' ses the King of Goulnaspurra, 'and they say 'tis a cure for a toothache also.'

"'Olive oil is all right in its way,' ses the doctor, 'but there's nothing like a good drop of whiskey on a cold night if you are not feeling well.'

"'Now,' ses Malachi, 'with reference to that little matter, I mean my journey to the land of

the mighty dead; all I can say is that 'tis better a man should die when he is out of employment like myself, than die when he has a good job. But as we must all die some time, there is no reason why we shouldn't emulate the ancient philosophers, when we are no more use to ourselves or any one else, and shuffle off this mortal coil by drinking our health, so to speak, in a glass of hemlock. Life, anyway,' ses he, 'is a feast for some, a famine for others, and a puzzle to all. Some think so little about it that they are dead before they realize what has happened, and others don't know that they are alive at all until they are married. Howsomever,' ses he, 'our own affairs are always interesting to ourselves, so I must now make my will before I die.' And then and there he asked for pen, ink, and paper, and this is what he wrote:

"'*I, Malachi, King of Goulnaspurra, bequeath the hard earnings of years of trials and tribulations for the purchase of a stained glass window with my name at the end of it, to be placed in the village church so*

that those who didn't give a traneen about me when I was alive, including the clergy themselves, may think kindly of me when I am dead.

"'To my son and heir, Henry Joseph Michael John Dorgan, Crown Prince of Goulnaspurra, I bequeath, in recognition of his indifference to me while I lived, one shilling and sixpence, and the Devil's blessing which is commonly called the curse of Cromwell. Besides, I am also desirous that he should inherit my bad temper, bad habits, rheumatics, gout, and all the other hereditary complaints of the family.

"'To my first cousin Padeen Dooley, the King of Ballinadurraka, I bequeath my large hand trowel and hammer, and to the Emperor of Japan I bequeath all my old clothes, either to be used by himself after the invasion of his country by the suffragettes, or to be placed in a museum with other kingly relics, after freedom of speech has killed monarchy. To the clergy I bequeath an abundance of good wishes to be distributed liberally among the poor, so that they may thrive on them in the absence of anything better. To the needy people of all nations, I be-

queath the privileges of the army and navy in times of war, and to everyone in general I bequeath all they can get from their friends for nothing.'

"And with that he laid down his pen, closed his eyes, and so passed to the land of no returning Malachi Dorgan, King of Goulnaspurra," said Micus.

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